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The Maverick

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# The Maverick

IN A PROLOGUE AND FOUR ACTS

## A DRAMA OF THE WEST

By

**JAMES L. KIBBEE**

*Author of "The Little Corporal", "Pedro's Revenge", "The Passing of Sheriff Barr", "The Marvelous Pocket of Gold", Etc.*

SOUTH WHITLEY, INDIANA

1911

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### PROLOGUE

| | |
|---|---|
| Rip | The Maverick, A Son of the West |
| Rose Lea | An Eastern Girl |
| John Selby | Manager of San Bernardo Ranch |
| Col. Lea | Rose's Father |
| Ferocity | A Cowboy |

### THE PLAY

| | |
|---|---|
| Rip | Always a Maverick |
| Mamie Loring | The Pride of Rio Seco |
| Ike | Foreman of the Jinglebobs |
| Faro Jim | A Gambler |
| Judge Loring | Mamie's Father |
| Lucas | Poker Dealer at Legal Tender |
| Pete | Barkeeper at Legal Tender |
| Parson | A Western Sky Pilot |
| Maria | A Mexican at Mamie's House |
| Monte, Sam, Walt, Roly | Of the Jinglebob Outfit |
| Chicken Bill, Ginger Blue | Cowboys from the Jinglebob |
| Newt | Cook of the Jinglebobs |
| Monte Dealer, 1st Mexican, 2nd Mexican | At the Legal Tender Saloon |
| Rose Lea | Who Returns from the East |
| Cap. Baird | Who Owns the Ranch |
| Hattie Baird | His Daughter, A Western Product |
| Chiquite | At the Baird Ranch |
| Sandy, Joe | Cowboys at the Baird Ranch |

# The Maverick

A DRAMA OF THE WEST

## PROLOGUE

SCENE: *Office room of the San Bernardo Ranch, San Antonio, Texas. Door in the flat at right, and bay window left. Door right 2E., and one left, upper. Long leather covered office table down stage, left. Back of table is revolving office chair, and in front of it a large arm chair. Table is littered with papers and very untidy. Down R. is a typewriter stand on which is a typewriter, small typewriter stool in front of it. The ceiling of the room is low, with long square rafters running length of the room. Walls are hung with western trophies including two deer heads, and a few appropriate pictures. Everything in good taste.*

FEROCITY

[*Examines pictures around room closely, looks carelessly over papers on table and finally goes down to typewriter. Hits a few keys cautiously, walks stealthily over to window and looks out to see if the coast is clear, then comes back to the typewriter and sits down.*] Wonder how the darn thing works? [*Picks out name slowly, spelling it as he goes, and is about through when machine sticks and refuses to budge.*] What the hell! [*Tries to push carriage along with his hand, then takes out gun and gives it a vigorous tap.*] Knowed I'd get into trouble. I'd better evaporate, cause they's goin ter be a stampede around this ranch when the boss finds out thar's bin somebody runnin the mowin machine. [*Pulls down hat and starts to exit suddenly through door in flat and almost runs into* ROSE, *jumps back, but appears relieved when he finds out who it is. Takes off hat and confronts her*

*awkwardly.*] Good mornin, Miss Rose—howdy.

ROSE

Good morning, Ferocity; are you looking for Mr. Selby.

FEROCITY

I should say not. I am jest tryin ter git away afore he comes in.

ROSE

What's wrong, now?

FEROCITY

Oh, hardly nothin. [*Eagerly, as the thought strikes him suddenly.*] Say do you know anything about them d—er—er—typewritin machines?

ROSE

Oh, ho, so that's it.

FEROCITY

Uh, huh—I jest put that there one on the hog.

ROSE

[*Looks at machine and then back to Ferocity inquiringly.*] On the hog?

FEROCITY

Yes, ma'am—put it on the hog train fer fair—busted it—smashed it.

ROSE

You broke the machine?

FEROCITY

I did. And if the boss finds out who done it, my job here wouldn't be worth a whoop in h—. [*Stops himself by putting hand to mouth.*] Wal, it wouldn't be worth much, cause the boss thinks more of that thing than he does of his gun.

ROSE

[*Goes over and examines machine.*] There you are; only a

couple of keys wedged together, impeding the movement of the carriage.

FEROCITY

Yaas, I knew it was something like that. And it ain't broke?

ROSE

No; and he'll never know you've touched it. [*Takes paper out of machine and throws it in waste basket.*] There goes the evidence of guilt.

FEROCITY

You shore saved my life that time. [*Admiringly.*] But you allus fix things up right.

ROSE

[*Amused.*] And pray what things have I fixed?

FEROCITY

Wal, the main thing I was ludin at—was Rip. You fixed him all right.

ROSE

I don't know that I undertsand what you mean by saying that I have "fixed" Rip.

FEROCITY

Wal, since you come down here Rip ain't the same feller. He allers was kinder dreamy, but now he don't seem to care whether he works or not any more, an what time he ain't p—rimpin—a tien his ties or combin his hair or brushin his shoes—why [*disgustedly*] he puts in readin of some book.

ROSE

And don't you like to see Rip improving himself?

FEROCITY

I can't see that its sich a hell of an improvement. It's kinder like gittin on a tear—the hardest part is gittin over it.

RIP

[*Enters hastily from R.2E.* ROSE *and* FEROCITY *both turn* RIP *stops suddenly as he sees who confronts him, and awkwardly takes off his hat.*] Good mornin.

ROSE

Why, Rip I've been expecting you. Perhaps you forgot you were going to take me to the round-up.

RIP

[*Earnestly.*] No, I didn't forget—I've been thinkin of it all mornin. But a bunch of Mr. Selby's fine stock got out of the pasture last night, and we've been huntin for 'em.

ROSE

With what success?

RIP

Not much success fer me. We got the cattle all right. But it spoiled my mornin.

FEROCITY

[*Who has been in evident discomfort during this conversation; coughs to attract their attention. They both look at him.*] Reckon you folks would excuse me.

RIP

Why, hello, Ferocity—you needn't go.

FEROCITY

[*Slyly.*] I know when I'm not necessary to the proceedins in hand, all right. [*Turns at door.*] All right. [*Exit R.2E.*]

ROSE

[*Coyly.*] Then you didn't forget.

RIP

[*Walking slowly toward her and looking intently into her eyes.*] I never forget you—I'm thinkin of you all the time.

ROSE

[*In wonderment.*] Why, Rip, you never said anything like that to me before.

RIP

I know I haven't; but I can't keep from saying it any longer. I know it's not right for me to even think of it, much less to tell you. I know the difference in our lives—that you have wealth, culture, refinement and fine friends, while I'm a Maverick, just a poor stray cowpuncher, without family, uncultured and uneducated. But no matter how wrong it is, I can't help loving you. [*Stops and seems to realize for the first time what he has been saying.*] Oh, I know you'll hate me for even daring to speak of it.

ROSE

No, I won't—I'll just *love* you for it.

RIP

Rose, you don't mean——

ROSE

Yes, I do mean it. And more than that I would give up everything in the world for you.

RIP

Its too good to be true. [*He clasps her in his arms.*] Its just like a fairy tale, ain't it Rose—the way you have come into my life, the way you have changed me.

ROSE

Has it meant much to you, Rip?

RIP

It has meant the only real happiness that I have ever known.

LEA

[*Enters R.2E. hastily. Stops abruptly when he sees* RIP *and* ROSE. *They step apart and stand looking at* LEA.] What does this mean?

ROSE
Father—

RIP
Why, sir—

LEA
[*Blusteringly.*] Not a word—not a word from either of you. What I have seen is enough. It is disgraceful. You shall account to me for this personally, sir. Do you understand?

RIP
Why, sir, I'd like to explain—

LEA
You'll have an opportunity to explain later. Come with me young lady. [*Grasps* ROSE'S *arm and leads her out door in flat.* RIP *walks to the door and looks after them, turns around, whistles and exits R.2E.*]

SELBY
[*Enters rapidly from left, upper. Hangs up coat and hat and busies himself straightening out papers on desk. He is working rapidly as* LEA *enters from door in flat.* SELBY *looks up as* LEA *comes in, says "Good morning" briskly, and goes on with his work.*]

LEA
[*Very gruffly.*] It is not a good morning—not by a damn sight, sir.

SELBY
Worrying again, eh? [*Stops work and looks up.*] Now see here, Colonel, our glorious climate, nor the rest cure, nor anything else is ever going to cure you if you keep up this worrying. Forget stocks and bonds for a time and give nature a chance. Why I've seen this climate cure a lot worse cases than yours.

LEA
Now don't harp on that old subject. You fellows down here think your climate is a panacea for all ills, and you never lose an

opportunity to preach your belief. I've heard it so much that I'm damned if I don't half believe it myself. But this time I'm not worrying about business—its about Rose.

SELBY

[*Going on with his work.*] Why worry about Rose. I thought she was enjoying herself immensely.

LEA

Yes, Rose and this dreamy cow-puncher foreman of yours.

SELBY

[*Looking up from work again.*] Why? Because she is learning the democratic spirit of the West, because there is health and color in her cheeks, and new life in her walk.

LEA

All that is well enough, but she's making an equal of that illiterate puncher.

SELBY

[*With spirit.*] Rip may be illiterate, sir, and even ignorant and uncouth according to your standard, but he is a man among men, and I may say, sir, a gentleman.

LEA

[*Savagely.*] Hold your tongue, John Selby; remember I'm the owner of this ranch and you are my manager.

SELBY

[*Rising.*] I do not forget that I have sold you my services, and as far as possible, I am giving you value received. But down here, Colonel Lea, we don't sell our opinions nor the right to express them to whom and when we please.

LEA

[*Subsiding.*] Then you knew it all along?

SELBY

I knew they were together a good deal.

LEA

I knew that too, but I didn't give it a moment's serious thought, for she has always been unapproachable, even by men in her own station in life, and I didn't dream that she would take up with this savage individual. Why, sir, our country's bluest blood flows through her veins.

SELBY

And that boy, sir, breathes the very spirit of the West. Do you know what it is? Manliness, honor and courage.

LEA

[*Sarcastically.*] Honorable and manly, eh? What would you say if I told you that I saw him kiss her, right in this very room, not ten minutes ago?

SELBY

[*Unconcerned.*] And may I ask what she did?

LEA

None of your damned business, sir, none of your business. The whole proceeding is disgraceful and humiliating beyond measure. [*Enter* RIP *R.2E.*]

SELBY

Here's Rip now, Col., ask him about it.

RIP

Col. Lea, I have come to make that explanation now, if you will listen to me.

SELBY

I will leave you alone, gentlemen. I was just ready to leave. [*Exit.*]

RIP

Thank you, John.

LEA

Huh! Seems to me you're very familiar with your chief.

RIP

Oh, yes—Mr. Selby. Wal, you see, he's mighty nigh raised me. My father died before I was old enough to know him—my mother when I was ten years old. John Selby was father and mother to me until I got big enough to take care of myself. Since that time he's been my companion and teacher and helper.

LEA

Pardon me, but has this interesting bit of history any bearing upon your proposed explanation?

RIP

It may have. I suppose you would naturally want to know something about the man who asks you for your daughter. My explanation is, that I love your daughter with all my heart, and I want her for my wife.

LEA

You have the presumption to even speak of it! You'd make a fine husband for Rose, wouldn't you? A wild, savage cow puncher! All you know is to drink, gamble and shoot.

RIP

You stop. No man ever talked to me that way, and by God you can't—even if you are her father. No man is good enough for a good woman, and I know I haven't anything to recommend me, but I love Rose and I believe I can make her happy.

LEA

[*In a milder tone.*] Young man, if you really love my daughter as you say you do, there's a better way to show it than by marrying her. [*Sarcastically.*] By the way, does she know anything about this shooting scrape of yours?

RIP

Why there was nothing about that for me to be ashamed of. He was drunk and was talking wild about a woman. I tried to make him shut up, and—well I had to shoot in self defense; besides, I didn't kill him.

LEA

[*Insinuatingly.*] How about the woman?

RIP

I didn't even know her, and to this day have never met her.

LEA

[*Sneeringly.*] A fine story indeed! [*Now pleading.*] But have you thought what you would be asking Rose to relinquish? She would have to forego all the luxuries of a life of wealth where her every desire has been anticipated—to give up her friends, her social standing, and her—home.

RIP

You don't mean—

LEA

I mean that if she married you, as much as I love her, I would cast her off—she would be no daughter of mine.

RIP

She says she is tired of her old life and would welcome the change.

LEA

This is but a passing fancy of hers—a girlish dream. This western life is new to her and she is attracted by the change. She would soon tire of it all as a child tires of its playthings; then how about her happiness, and your happiness. When she would awaken to a realization of what she had done, she would find that none of her thousand little whims could be gratified—that she was chained to environments that were tiresome and married to a man who met none of her ideals.

RIP

[*Thinking seriously as the evident truth strikes home.*] I wonder if you are right—but I know she cares now.

LEA

Granting you that she is sincere now—that for the moment

she has allowed her sentiment to usurp her good judgment, what of the awakening, young man? Suppose you allowed her to give up her home and stay down here among those savages, would it show your love for her or your innate selfishness?

RIP

Well, what do want me to do? I care only for her happiness.

LEA

Then prove it, sir, prove it. Go away from here tonight without seeing her again and let her go back to her home and happiness.

RIP

[*Sadly.*] I knew it was all wrong for me to even think of it. I guess she wouldn't fit down here; and I'll do what you say. By God, I will.

LEA

John Selby was right—you are a man.

ROSE

[*Enters from R.2E.*] I beg pardon, am I intruding?

LEA

On the contrary, I was just about to send for you. This young man has asked me for your hand in marriage. I have shown him the impossibilities of such a union, and of course have rejected his offer.

ROSE

Father, I have always been a dutiful child to you, responding to your every wish, but I do not thank you for your interference in this case. The time has come when I must choose for myself which way my happiness lies, regardless of your wishes.

LEA

That would be very well, daughter, were this man all that you had supposed him. But he has just acknowledged to me that he has been trying to win you for your money, not for your-

self. [RIP *starts forward as though to speak but meets the challenging stare of* LEA *and stops short. Returns the stare defiantly and then accepts the situation.*]

ROSE

[*Turning to* RIP *pleadingly.*] Rip it is not so, you did not say it. [*He looks at her longingly for a moment, then turns his back and bows his head.*]

LEA

And perhaps you didn't know that less than a year ago he was in a shooting scrape over another woman.

RIP

[*Turns on him savagely.*] Don't go too far.

ROSE

[*Looks at him in horror.*] Rip!

LEA

Come daughter, we will go. [*Puts his arm around her.*]

ROSE

[*Sobbing.*] Rip, I can't believe it. I thought you were different, so manly and honorable—but even you, Rip.

RIP

[*Starts toward her with his arms outstretched.*] Rose I swar—[*Then he catches* LEA'S *defiant glace again. He turns and walks down to table and stands with head bowed as they go out door in flat. He walks up to door and back to table.*] And this is the end! I was a fool. I might have known no such happiness could ever come to a Maverick like me. She is gone out of my life, and I reckon I'll just keep on being a Maverick till the end.

CURTAIN

## ACT I

SCENE 1: *Morning of a spring day, three years later. Front yard of the Loring home, Rio Seco, New Mexico. Porch to right extending out. Fence along left and rear. There is a gate left 2E., almost in front of the porch. A set tree down, left, flower bed center of stage. A large comfortable rocker on porch, a side saddle hanging on wall.*

MARIA: [*Discovered sweeping porch. Sweeps steps, sits down with broom under her arm, rolls cigarette and goes in house smoking. As she goes in two cowboys,* CHICKEN BILL *and* GINGER BLUE *ride in back of fence in rear and around to gate. They both turn sideways in their saddles, one leg thrown over saddle and looks sheepishly at each other.* GINGER *rolls cigarette, passes paper and tobacco to his companion, who then rolls cigarette. Both smoke.*]

CHICKEN

Wal, whar's yer nerve? Goin ter keep me sittin here all day?

GINGER

Whar's yourn? I don't see you makin any stampede toward the house.

CHICKEN

I never lowed to—you done the invitin on this deal. I jest come along to keep you company, and sorter encourage you like.

GINGER

The hell you did! I suppose you don't even want to look at her?

CHICKEN

Well, I haven't got it as bad as you have, anyhow. [MAMIE *comes out on porch with book in hand, starts to sit down and sees the boys. She drops her book in chair and starts out to gate to meet them.*]

MAMIE
Well, boys, good morning.

[*Both boys dismount hurriedly and awkwardly. Mamie opens gate and stands against it while she shakes hands with them.*]

CHICKEN
Howdy, Miss Mamie, howdy. [*Shakes hands.*]

GINGER
Good mornin to yer. [*Shakes hands.*]

MAMIE
[*Holding gate open for them.*] Won't you come in? [GINGER *starts to accept the invitation, but is stopped by his friend's hesitancy and speech.*]

CHICKEN
We ain't hardly got time this mornin. We jest lowed as how we'd drap in an see how the Jedge is gittin along.

GINGER
Not as how we wouldn't like to make you a visit—but business afore pleasure is what Rip says. [*They mount.*]

MAMIE
[*Trying to hide her concern.*] Where is Rip this morning?

CHICKEN
Reckon he'll be along this way directly. We're expectin the Jinglebobs back offen the roundup today and Rip's coming in to ree-plenish the grub supply.

GINGER
How'd you say the Jedge was, Miss Mamie?

MAMIE
He seems to be resting easy this morning. He passed a restless night and just went to sleep a few minutes ago, or I'd ask you to see him.

GINGER

We don't want to disturb him. We'll be driftin now, ma'am, and if there's anything we can do for you jest let us know. [*They exit right.*]

MAMIE

Good bye, boys. Maybe you can find time to stop on your way back. [*She walks over to fence in rear and waves at them.*] I wonder why Rip stayed away yesterday. He don't know how I miss him or he'd come oftener. [*Looks down the road in other direction.*] Oh, there's some one coming now. Yes, it's Rip. He mustn't know I've been watching for him. [*Runs back to porch and sits down in chair, picks up book and appears to be reading As* RIP *rides on at a gallop she jumps up with a surprised look on her face, and runs down to gate to meet him.*] Good morning Stranger, you took me by surprise that time, didn't you?

RIP

[*Dismounts, throws bridle over gate post and rushes in to meet her. Takes both her hands in his and laughs heartily.*] Now look here, little pal, you know you can't fool me that way. Remember I can see just as far as you can and I saw somebody down at that fence a minute ago. [*She hangs her head.*] Come now, fess up, playin possom on me again, eh? [*Laughs heartily, she looks up and laughs with him.*] My, how pretty you are this morning. And how's the Judge?

MAMIE

He is sleeping now. He was worrying all day yesterday because you didn't come. He says he wants to see you on some important business. He had an awfully poor night last night, and Rip, I just know he can't last much longer. Dear old dad, what a hard fight he's made, knowing all the time there wasn't any chance for him to win.

RIP

Its too bad, little pal, that things have to be the way they are, but we both know what it means when a consumptive gets that

rattle in his throat and that little spot of red high in his cheeks. He has made a brave fight, knowin the cards were stacked against him. You've been brave too, and you must keep on bein brave and prepare yourself for the worst.

MAMIE

I know it, Rip; I've realized that the end was drawing near. It is only your help that has made me strong enough to bear it. [*Starts to cry.*]

RIP

There, there, now, we won't think of it any more, we'll just hope for the best. [*Trying to cheer her up.*] And if your father has got so much to say to me, I reckon I'd better take my horse to the shed and feed him. Besides I've made some plans for the future and I want to tell you all about them.

MAMIE

Oh won't that be fine, and you can stay all afternoon. [*Rip throws down his gloves on corner of porch, leads horse through gate and around back. Mamie goes over and picks up gloves and kisses them. Lays them down and starts to go in.*] I wonder what his plans are. Maybe they're like mine. [*Just as she starts to go in* FARO JIM *comes around corner of fence. She hears him and turns. He is standing with hat in hand. She gives a startled exclamation.*]

FARO JIM

I wish you good morning, Mamie. [*He walks in through gate.*]

MAMIE

[*Showing fear in her expression and speech.*] Good morning, Faro Jim.

FARO JIM

Now I don't think you are fair with me. Haven't we been friends long enough for you to drop the "Faro" and call me

plain "Jim?" And why do you always tremble when I'm around; are you afraid of me?

MAMIE

[*Hesitating.*] Oh, no, I'm not afraid. I must go in and see father now—you'll excuse me, won't you?

FARO JIM

Its always the same. You always find an excuse when I want to talk to you. But you are going to listen to me this time, if never again. I'm not the man to lay down until I've seen the other fellow's hand. I've lived a wild reckless life, I know. but there's one thing good in it, and that's my love for you. [*Mamie steps back startled.*] Yes, I've loved you ever since you and your dad first came to Seco. I want you—want you for my own, and I mean to have you. Your old man's goin to cash in soon and you'll need some one to take care of you then.

MAMIE

[*Excitedly.*] Faro Jim you have no right to talk to me this way. I would never marry any man unless I at least respected him, and I have never had any respect for you. I'm always afraid of you.

FARO JIM

You did have some time for me once—before Gentleman Rip came to Seco. He's made the change. [*Picks up the gloves.*] Eh, huh, he's here now. [*Pleadingly.*] Don't be too hasty about this matter, little gal. I've done real well since I've been out here and I've gathered together more of this world's goods than your handsome puncher, and could take better care of you than he could.

MAMIE

Don't come to me boasting of your filthy money, Faro Jim, for I know how you got it. I know that every dollar of it was the hard earned wages of good-hearted cowboys, most of them my friends, and that you took it from them by trickery and cunning.

FARO JIM

I staked my money against theirs and they lost; that's a fair game, isn't it?

MAMIE

Yes, if it's played fair, but you've never played fair. [FARO JIM *starts.*] Oh, I know you're the cleverest card shark on the plains, and your talking to me of love is infamous and cowardly.

FARO JIM

[*Desperately.*] Look here, Mamie, I've never wanted anything in my life like I've wanted you, and I haven't thrown down my hand yet. I never quit a game until the last card is played.

MAMIE

[*Thoroughly aroused.*] Faro Jim, you go. [*Pointing to gate.*] Before I call Rip.

FARO JIM

Damn Rip! [*Looks at her defiantly, then starts away.*] Oh, very well, I'll see him later. [*Goes to gate, where he turns and looks at* MAMIE, *shrugging his shoulders defiantly, then exits in same direction the cowboys have taken.* MAMIE *shudders and covers her face with her hands as* RIP *comes on from back of porch.*]

RIP

Why Mamie, what's the matter? Is the Judge worse?

MAMIE

[*Sobbing.*] No, Faro Jim has been here. [*Rip loosens his gun and takes a step away from her. She grasps him by the arm.*] No, Rip, no trouble with him—you promised me that you know.

RIP

You know I don't want trouble, Mamie, but this gambler's got to quit bothering you.

MAMIE

[*Trying to smile through her tears.*] Let's don't worry about him, Rip, this is too nice a day to spoil and we will talk only about subjects which are bright and happy. Come and sit down now and tell me about these wonderful plans of yours. You may sit on the step there. [*She sits down in chair and Rip sits on step at her feet.*]

RIP

Why, little pal, its nothin so very wonderful—just some foolish notions of mine. And I hardly know where to start or how to say it. I've always been just a cowboy and I love the west, its rolling prairies, its big hearted men, and its work. But there was born in me a restlessness—it must have been just the start of what has grown into a great, overwhelming desire. It is vague, yet powerful; but it is always there, urging me on to fields of new endeavor—to go out into the world and make my way among men—I reckon some folks would call it ambition. It has been with me so long that its grown to be a part of my nature, but after all its only a dreamy sort of ambition, for I've never had the stamina or courage to accomplish anything. Yes, I've been a dreamer, Mamie—just a dreamer, that's all. It takes work and courage, and strength to win, and these are the things I lack. Ah, well, I've always been just a Maverick, anyway.

MAMIE

Several times you've spoken of yourself as a Maverick, Rip, and I can't see why. No one could have more friends than you—everybody likes you. That isn't being a Maverick is it?

RIP

I first got the idea from my mother—they were her last words to me, as she called me to her and said, "My little boy, you'll be a Maverick soon; you'll be turned out on the great range among all the wild herds to shift for yourself." So it always seemed to me that I was an alein—not that I haven't had friends, for I have, and the staunch, loyal friends that are to be found only on

the plains of the west. There was John Selby, and there is Ike, dear old Ike, who has been closer to me than any brother could have been. Then you and the Judge have been as sister and father to me. You took me into your home and cared for me when I was hurt and a stranger here, and you've both given me new life and new hopes. When I came to Seco three years ago, I was on my way East. But I made friends here and found pleasant surroundings, so I have kept putting off my going from time to time.

MAMIE

But, Rip, what is this longing of yours? What aim have you in view? What do you wish to accomplish?

RIP

Nothing definite—its just an ambition to do something beside punching cows—to accomplish something big, to make myself felt in the world.

MAMIE

Rip, there are just as big things to be accomplished here as anywhere. The West needs its big men, even more than the East. There is a great work here, Rip, for those who will do it.

RIP

I know that, too, but its a sort of restlessness that makes me want to catch step with the march of civilization. I want to feel the heart throb of a busy world.

MAMIE

[*Slowly, as though just realizing what his talk means.*] Then, Rip, you are going to leave Seco?

RIP

Yes, that's it. Maybe I'm foolish, maybe I'm all wrong. but it isn't the inspiration of a moment, Mamie,—its the desire of a life time. Whether it brings success or failure, I must go.

MAMIE

And when are you going?

RIP

Soon now. The roundups are coming in and when the Jingle-bobs are all back, I can go.

MAMIE

[*Suppressing a sob.*] But you won't go until—until after—

RIP

You mean about your father, Mamie? [*She nods her head, sobbing.*] No, I won't, little sister, I will stay with you until that is over.

[*The* JUDGE *is heard calling "Mamie" from the house.*]

MAMIE

There's father calling, I'll see what he wants. [*Wipes her eyes.* RIP *walks down to gate and looks down the road, then goes back on porch. Sees* MAMIE *bringing her father out, steps in and comes out with his arm around the* JUDGE. MAMIE *brings pillows which she arranges in chair.* JUDGE *sits down slowly.*]

JUDGE

[*Coughs violently.*] There now, the fresh air will do me good. When did you come, Rip?

RIP

Only been here long enough to put my horse away.

JUDGE

That's right, then you'll stay a while.

MAMIE

[*Bending over* JUDGE *very tenderly.*] Are you sure you're all right, father dear?

JUDGE

Feeling just fine. Don't worry about me.

MAMIE

Well, then, I'm going to leave you two to entertain each other while I get you a nice lunch.

RIP

I must go in to Seco after lunch and order some supplies for those hungry Jinglebobs. [*Exit* MAMIE *into house.*]

JUDGE

[*Delighted.*] Are the Jinglebobs home again?

RIP

Not yet, but they were out at Penyosco this morning, so I expect they'll be in town this afternoon.

JUDGE

I'd love to see them again before I go. They're a fine bunch of men, Rip. If they come too late, tell them that I love them all, and to remember that some day each of them will have to follow me over to the Great Roundup where the Range Foreman of the Universe cuts out his own and leaves the rest for the rustlers. [*Again coughs violently.*]

RIP

[*Starting up with outstretched hand.*] Don't, sir, don't talk that way. You're not through yet.

JUDGE

Yes, I am—I know that my time has come. I've held on longer now that I should have. There's just one thing, that's kept me so long, and that's—

RIP

[*Slowly.*] Mamie.

JUDGE

Yes, Mamie, She'll be alone when I am gone, Rip. I've raised her alone. Why it will be just like taking a little calf from its mother and turning it loose on the wild, bleak prairies, with no protection from the coyotes or the wolves and no shelter from the summer's heat, or the winter's chill.

RIP

Yes, but its different with Mamie, sir. Why there isn't a boy

on the range who isn't her friend—who wouldn't fight for her at the drop of his hat, or who wouldn't give her his last dollar. She'll never want for care, or love or kindness.

JUDGE

It isn't that, I know she has plenty of friends—good friends, but just friends don't fill a woman's life, my boy. They need a good man's love to make them happy. Rip, I've been like a father to you, and you're just the kind of a man I would like to have had for my son, if God had ever given me one. So I'm going to talk to you now just as though you were my own boy. I'm going to talk for Mamie's happiness—and your happiness, too. [*Rip has a startled look as tho he realizes what is coming.*] I've watched with gladness in my heart how you and Mamie have been drawn toward each other. I know she loves you with all her heart, and I know that you are the one man who can make her happy after I'm gone.

RIP

[*Trying hard to conceal his emotion.*] But, sir—

JUDGE

Oh, I know the only reason that it hasn't happened long ago has been my condition. I know that you intend to take her some day, and I want to ask you, Rip, to make it now—now, before I go. Then I can leave happy, knowing all is well with her. I shall not see the sun sink behind old Capitan today, and this is the last wish of an old man's heart.

RIP

[*During the* JUDGE'S *speech turns his head away and depicts by his facial expression, first his surprise, then the fight with himself as he realizes that what the* JUDGE *is asking him means the giving up of his ambitions. Gets up slowly and walks down stage.*] My God, he don't know what he's asking—but he thinks I love her. I can't forget all they have been to me. I have never done any particular good in the world, and I reckon this is my chance. [*Hesitates, then a look of determination comes into his*

*face.*] I'll do it. [*Goes back to Judge.*] I—I reckon I have been kind of bashful, sir, I'm right smart glad that you took a hard job off my hands so that I didn't have to ask you. [*Makes poor attempt to joke.*] I thought all along I was keepin it from you, and you knew all the time. [*Seriously.*] I know I'm not half good enough for Mamie, and I know that she could get a man that amounts to somethin in this world, but I'll try and make her happy, sir. So help me God, I will. But I've never asked her yet if she loved me, and I don't know if she'll agree to such a sudden marriage.

JUDGE

I know her better than you do, my boy, and I know that it will be alright. I had it all planned and knew just how it was coming out today, for I sent word to Parson Henry to come over here this afternoon. [*Coughing.*] We haven't any time to waste, for I can't last through many more of these coughing spells. [*Coughs.*] Its the beginning of the end, Rip, its the beginning of the end. Take me in and tell Mamie. [RIP *puts his arm around him and takes him into the house. Comes back on porch as* MAMIE *comes in yard.*

MAMIE

[*With a startled expression.*] Rip, where is father?

RIP

In the house. Come here. [*Takes both her hands in his.*] Little pal, don't be frightened—be brave as you have always been. You must know the truth now. Your father says himself he'll never see the sun set again. [MAMIE *lays her head on his shoulder and sobs.*] Brace up, Mamie, for I've got something else to say to you. [*She looks up expectant.*] This ain't a very proper time for me to be making love to you, or to ask you to become my wife. [*With a far away look in his eyes.*] But I reckon you've known all along that I wanted you, and didn't have the courage to tell you. Could you take just a common cow puncher like me, Mamie—could you?

MAMIE

Rip, there's something strange about the way you talk. You haven't asked me if I loved you, or told me that you loved me.

RIP

I didn't think this was a fit time to talk much about love, or our happiness, but you must have known all along that I [*hesitates*] love you. Maybe I've taken too much for granted, but I just seemed to know that you loved me.

MAMIE

Yes, Rip, I do love you, with all my heart, and I'll marry you as soon as I can. But you know I must stay with father as long as he needs me.

RIP

I just asked your father for you, and it seemed to be the fulfillment of a wish of his. And, Mamie, it is his last request that we should be married before he passes over the range. We can't deny him this wish; that will mean that this afternoon you must become my little wife. Can you do it, Mamie dear?

MAMIE

If father wishes it, and if you really want me, Rip, why of course I'll do it. Oh, Rip, Rip. [*She throws her arms around his neck and sobs.*]

RIP

I hope I shall always make you happy, little girl, and that you may never live to regret your decision. Now go and get ready; and hurry up and dry those tears, for yonder is Parson Henry laughing at us. [*Mamie jumps away very much embarrassed and speaks to Parson Henry. He rides up to the gate, throws his bridle over gate post and comes into the yard.*]

MAMIE

Good morning, Parson Henry. I—I—Oh, Rip will tell you. [*Turns and runs into house. Rip comes forward and shakes hands with the Parson. He has a foolish smile on his face, and*

*the Parson is also laughing.*]

PARSON

So it has come at last, my boy, I've been expecting this and it seems I got here just in time, eh? [*Laugh.*]

RIP

You said that for a joke, Parson Henry, but it isn't any joke. Mamie and I are going to be married just as soon as you can tie the knot. The Judge is almost gone and he wants to see us married before he dies.

PARSON

It's been a wish of mine, Rip, to join you two young folks together and start you happily along life's journey. But I'm sorry that it has to be under such unhappy circumstances. You are getting the finest little girl ever seen around these parts, and I know you'll make her happy.

RIP

I'll try, sir, I'll try. Go in, Parson Henry, and see the Judge I'll follow in a moment. [PARSON *goes in.* RIP *walks slowly down to gate and leans on it, then says, meditatingly*] "I am of the West why shouldn't the West claim me for its own." [*Walks back to house, gets half way up the steps, and then turns.*] Farewell, dear old dream life. Good bye my ambitions, my hopes—and Rose. I hear you calling from the far places, but duty's call is close at hand, and I must follow. [*With one hand outstretched toward the front and one toward the house, he backs slowly into the house as*

THE CURTAIN DROPS

## ACT II

SCENE 2—*Afternoon of the same day. Bar room of the Legal Tender saloon, Rio Seco. To the right is the bar, extending almost the entire depth of the stage; a few feet to the left in the flat is the door; toward the right in the flat a small four-paned window. Down left, is the faro table and just back of it the monte table, and in the rear between the window and the door is the poker table. The door is open from the inside and is tied back. Through it can be seen an adobe building, upon it a large sign, rudely painted, "GENERAL STORE." Through the window also a portion of a building can be seen. As the curtain goes up two rough looking Mexicans are playing at the monte table, a Mexican dealing.* PETE *is behind the bar, and* LUCAS *lounges against the bar shaking dice idly.* FARO JIM *is seated in chair at faro table with his feet up on table, smoking a cigarette.*

1ST MEXICAN
Es mi alsi.

2ND MEXICAN
[*Threateningly.*] Es mio.

1ST MEXICAN
[*Submissively.*] Pues bien. [*To dealer.*] Dios en el caballo.

[*The dealer pays no attention to their quarrel, methodically dealing when they have placed their bets. The conversation which follows is broken now and then by exclamations from the Mexicans.*]

FARO JIM
This certainly has been somethin of a tame summer. Haven't seen any excitment for as much as three months.

LUCAS
Tha'ts you, all right. Allers lookin fer excitement. Fer myself,

I'm glad when they go away fer a month or two. It sorter gives a feller a chance to rest up fer a spell.

FARO JIM

Well, I won't stay here another summer. I'll vacate and come back again when times gets prosperous.

PETE

She'll open up agin purty soon, an be as lively as ever. The roundups are all through an the outfits will be driftin in directly, an then Seco'll seem natural again.

LUCAS

The Jinglebob outfit was out at Penyasco this mornin. They orter be ridin in any time, now.

PETE

They're the best bunch on the range, an I'm plum tickled to death that they're first to roll in. They ain't sparin with the dinero, either. They throws it around like it was cheap as alkali dust.

FARO JIM

[*Sneeringly.*] They may be good for your business, Pete, but not for mine. [*Throws away cigarette.*] They're too damn wise.

1ST MEXICAN

Mi cacho aqui. [*Pointing to card.*] Ei biene el caballo. Trente en el tres.

DEALER

Want ter play her straight?

1ST MEXICAN

Segura que si.

DEALER

[*Gruffly.*] Then put her on the side. [*Moves money.*]

LUCAS

I reckon Rip'll be glad when they get back. He looks kinder lonesome, lately. Then he sorter belongs to the Jinglebobs.

FARO JIM

[*Sneeringly.*] He does seem to hanker after them—more than they do after him, maybe. But he's thinking too much of the girls lately to do any work. Its a sure sign when they refuse to go out with the roundup, and take to hanging around town.

LUCAS

[*Pompously.*] Gals, hell. Its my opinion he's gettin more larnin in his head than's good for him. You know you can fill a barrel till she's full, then she's got to run over or bust. Why he's allers readin some book or papers, stead of playin poker or somethin useful. I can't see what good book larnin is goin ter do anybody when it comes to punchin cows.

PETE

Larnin is good fer anybody. I never had any relinquishments in regard to my education.

LUCAS

What in hell's that?

PETE

That means I ain't never been sorry I got it.

LUCAS

Well it sounds nice, anyway.

PETE

As fer Rip workin, he can work any time he wants ter. He's the best puncher on this here range and he can ride with munificient eclat, and with a lasso he's simply malevolent.

LUCAS

[*Threateningly.*] Say young feller, you got anything agin me?

PETE

Nothin in particular.

LUCAS

Then don't throw any more of them dictionaries at me. No common poker dealer could stay sober with them things flyin around in the air. Then again you're takin advantage of our ignorance.

FARO JIM

Who is this Rip, anyway, and where'd he come from?

PETE

[*Stops wiping his glasses and glares over the bar at* FARO JIM.] Whar'd he come from? Well, that is a la-loo-la. Whar'd he come from! You inquirin whar a man comes from, lookin as you do. I might as well ask whar you come from, or Lucas, or Long John or any of the rest of'em. Why don't you ask me whar I come from? [*Disgustedly.*] Been here as long as you have and don't know yet that's one thing you can't never ask a man in this part of the country. Ask him how many mavericks he's branded, how many horses he's stole, or how many men he's drapped, but never who he is or whar he comes from. [*Two cow boys,* CHICKEN *and* GINGER, *come in and order drinks and* PETE *waits on them.*]

LUCAS

[*To Faro Jim.*] Now you got Pete plum riled up. He won't get over that today.

FARO JIM

He's in a corral with all the rest of them. Roped in by Gentleman Rip. [*The cow boys go to poker table after they have finished drinking and takes seats while* LUCAS *follows leisurely.* FARO JIM *saunters back to the faro table, leans back in his chair, rolls cigarette and looks at* PETE *derisively.* PETE *eyes him savagely and wipes glasses furiously.*]

PETE

Whar'd he come from. If that ain't simply mediocrity. [*Enter* IKE, SAM, MONTE, WALT *and* ROLY. *All are weather beaten and dust begrimed, as tho from hard riding.*] [*To the dealers as he sees who they are.*] Here they are boys, [*Drops cloth and glass he is wiping on the bar and runs out in front to greet them.*]

LUCAS

The Jinglebobs! [*All the dealers and* CHICKEN *and* GINGER *get up to greet the new arrivals. They all stalk around shaking hands and greeting each other noisily.*]

IKE

What'll you have boys, what'll you have? Damn me if I ain't as dry as the grass on the Turkey Track range. [*They line up to the bar and all are supplied with drink. As* PETE *puts different flask of whiskey in front of* MONTE.] Here, Pete, none of that—Monte gets stuff out of the same bottle as ourn. [*Pete jerks bottle from in front of Monte and sulkily replaces it with another*] Now, don't get excited, Pete. As a general rule I ain't got no more use for a greaser than you have, but there's a Mexican that's a white man. Why he's been with my outfit for three years, and he ain't even stole as much as a strap off'n my saddle—that is, that I ever knowed about. Sometimes I think that Monte has so far forgot the teachins of his race that he'd fight for me if I'd ask him to. [*Laughing*] How about it Monte?

MONTE

Mr. Ike, I gotta de great beeg lub een my heart for you, an I lak for you plees don' mak a de joke for de Mexican. [*to* PETE] Pete ef you'll plees give a fer me de odder wheesky again I'll be very much de thank fer you. I don' lak verra much fer de fine wheesky. I lak fer de wheesky dat burns lak hell. [*Pete returns other bottle.*]

IKE

Suit yourself Monte. If rotgut's what you want, why that's what you get. Drink hearty, boys, for this has been somethin

of a hard, dry trip, and I reckon we're all more'n glad to get a chance to drink outen a glass again. [*Everybody drinks but* MONTE *who proceeds to fill his glass to the brim.*]

LUCAS

Say, Pete, just hand Monte a towel, he don't want no drink, he wants to take a bath. [*All laugh.* MONTE *looks at him scornfully, picks up glass and drinks contents with one gulp, then sputters and makes wry faces.*]

PETE

He's corraled that burnin sensation he war lookin fer. That's the strongest stuff ever brought to Seco.

MONTE

[*Wipes off mouth with red bandana, and smacks lips with evident satisfaction.*] That's not a bera beeg drink. Den I guess eef I'll tak de cheep wheesky, I'll getta more fer de same money lak you do. [*General laughter.*]

SAM

I say, Pete, how's the Jedge gittin along?

WALT

An Mamie, bless her—how's Mamie?

PETE

[*Takes time to go to end of bar, spit out chew of tobacco and wash his mouth, waving at them meantime.*] Not so fast, boys, not so fast. Take one drink at a time and they'll last longer. But beginnin at the first, the Jedge is purty nigh gone—almost ready to count up his checks and cash in.

SAM

He's hung on some remarkable to be as far gone as he was when he come here.

PETE

Wal, that's what he come out here for, warn't it—to ree-cup-erate?

IKE

He's a good citizen fer this here community, and I'm sorry that he kain't stay with us. He's had a kind of civilizin influence on this here camp—him and Mamie. I'm sayin he's the sort of a man we kain't afford to lose, but, [*solemnly*] this here's a game where we ain't got no say.

SAM

Maybe he ain't as bad as Pete thinks. The first time I ever seed him I thought he'd be a goner inside of four weeks. That's been four years and he's still hangin on.

IKE

If it hadn't been fer little Mamie he'd a give up the fight long ago.

SAM

Wal, that's a gal anybody could live for. A feller couldn't help bein better and happier after seein her. I heerd a pianner over to Vegas onct, but it wa'nt half so purty music as that laugh of her'n. They ain't a puncher from Seven Rivers to Sumner that ain't rid into Seco the last two summers to get a look at her purty face—an' maybe a smile, if he was lucky.

IKE

[*Laughing heartily.*] Wal, Sam, you have got it. Whar'd it break out first. Look at him, boys, he's in love, he is. Throwed clean as a whistle. [*Sobering down.*] Course I know she's made things different fer all of us, and we all got a great big place in our hearts fer her. She's the prettiest flower God ever planted in the Valley of the Pecos. It's like as though we'd bring a lily and set it out on one of them sand hills, out amongst the sage brush and cactus.

MONTE

[*Whistles.*] An de boss laugh a fer de Sam.

PETE

How kon-sis-tent! Tryin to show another man how to ride a

hoss and gets throwed hisself.

MONTE

[*To* PETE *earnestly.*] An how ees my fren, da Rip? Ees it buena, eh?

FARO JIM

Monte and Rip *are* rather loving since Rip saved him from being cut up some by that greaser friend of his. Eh, Monte?

MONTE

By dam you, Faro Jeem, Rip ees my verra good fren.

GINGER

I kinder got a hunch there's somethin doing around the Jedge's house today. He told me yesterday to ask Parson Henry to ride over thar this mornin.

PETE

Thought maybe thar was goin to be a ceremony, Ginger?

IKE

Rip wouldn't sit in no game like that unless us fellers got in on the deal.

FARO JIM

Maybe it's about time there was a wedding comin off. That Rip fellow [RIP *is passing the window, and on hearing his name, stops and listens*] ain't talkin much and seems to be awful innocent, but I'll bet a horse as far as the girl's concerned he's got you all skinned a mile. He's with her all of his spare time—rides with her, walks with her, eats with her and [RIP *comes inside the door*] oh, well, [*with a shrug of his shoulders*] I'm thinkin we're getting so civilized around here, we just naturally got to have some kind of a social scandal.

IKE

What do you mean, you sneakin coyote?

FARO JIM

You understand English, don't you?

IKE

You wouldn't dare say that if Rip war here, and by God, you cain't say it anyway. [IKE *grabs for his gun and gets it half way out, when* RIP *grabs him by the arm and steps in front of him.* FARO JIM *is standing with his gun in his hand, puts it back in holster and looks at* RIP *defiantly.*]

RIP

None of that, Ike, this is my trouble and I want to take care of it myself. [*Speaks to* FARO JIM *very slowly and deliberately.*] Faro Jim, I've been on these here plains as long as I can remember. Sometimes I've found myself in some pretty bad holes, but I'm glad to say I ain't never been forced to kill. But if you don't take back them lying words [FARO JIM *starts to draw, but* RIP *gets the drop on him by throwing the gun over against his hip.* RIP *is leaning over with left hand on table, his hat pushed back.*] I'll send you to hell quicker than you can bat your eye. [*They look each other in the eye for a moment, then* FARO JIM *weakens, and with a shrug of his shoulders, sits down.*]

FARO JIM

Why, if it's going to cause any unpleasantness, I didn't really mean anything. I wouldn't say anything against any lady's reputation—much less a friend of yours. [*Offers to shake hands.* RIP *points to the door.* FARO JIM *tosses away his cigarette, looks at* RIP *a moment with hatred showing in his every look and walks carelessly to door.*] Well if that's the way you take my apology, why watch out Mr. Rip, watch out. [*He turns and walks by window and* RIP *watches him with gun over his arm. As* JIM *passes window he looks in with a leer and disappears.* RIP *stands looking toward window for a moment after* JIM *has gone then turns and looks at the boys, and for the first time seems to realize who they are. He quickly shoves gun in holster and steps forward to greet them.*]

RIP

The Jinglebobs! I didn't know you were back.

IKE

Ain't been back long enough to speak of.

RIP

Old Alkali Ike, and Sam, and Roly, and Walt and Monte, mi amigo, how's Mont? [*Shakes hands all around.*] It does seem good to see you all back again.

SAM

It seems like you've kinder strayed from the main bunch these days, Rip, but we're gald to round you up once in a while anyway.

MONTE

Rip, ef you'll gotta fer de lub den I'll gib fer you de bera good advice—don luben too much fer de guirls. Lub ees a bera bad beesnais. One time I'll luben fer a little Mexican guirl. [*Sighs.*] Carambo! but dat's a purty guirl. Beeg, black eyes; cheeks justa lak a de wild roses. Balga me dios, que bonita! All de time she'll say how mucha she'll lub fer me, an den one day she'll run away wid a dam Gringo son-of-a-gun. [*They all laugh.*]

SAM

Wal, Rip, I reckon you'll have to come through.

RIP

[*Slowly.*] In one way I orter treat, and then again I can't.

SAM

You shorely cain't deny that advice was good enough fer one round, anyway.

IKE

[*Solemnly.*] And if you follow it, its liable to save you a heap of trouble, and mebbe some heart aches.

RIP

In the first place I ain't been married more'n an hour—for that I reckon I ought to treat. [*They all rush at him trying to shake, but* RIP *waves them back.*]

PETE

[*Solemnly.*] Married! I knowed somethin was the matter with him as soon as he come in the door.

RIP

Then again, ten minutes after I married the old man passed over the Great Divide; which means that you all got in just in time to attend the funeral. [*He leans on the bar with his right elbow, facing the audience. The men remove their hats, talk among themselves and leave the room in twos and threes. The Mexicans are still playing at the monte table, apparently oblivious to all else save their game, while* PETE *busies himself cleaning up behind the bar.* IKE *and* RIP *remain.* RIP *turns slowly around after they have gone.*] It hit the boys some hard, didn't it, Ike?

IKE

It weren't a very happy home comin, were it? [*Sits on faro table.*] Now, pard, what's all the trouble and how'd it come about.

RIP

[*Falls dejectedly astride a chair facing* IKE.] Course you know, Ike, what Mamie and the old man did for me when I didn't have a friend this side of the Texas line. And I've loved Mamie like I would a sister, if I'd ever had one, but the Judge got it into his head it was different. And today when he saw that the end had come, he asked that we be married. He thought we intended to anyhow, and he wanted to see her protected before he left. I promised him, Ike, I'd try and make her happy.

IKE

[*Reverently.*] God help you to keep that promise, tho it hadn't orter be hard to do.

RIP

Somehow I don't feel like I've done the square thing by Mamie. She's my wife now and I'm going to make her happy if its in my power, but I don't love her, nor I never can. Some day I'll tell you why. Knowin this, tell me Ike, do you think I've done what's square?

IKE

I don't know what some folks might say, but as fer me—well, Rip, I've been proud of you the time you've been in Seco cause you've always showed yourself to be a man, and I can say I'm prouder of you now than I ever was before. [*Both standing, center, they clasp hands as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

## ACT III

ONE *year later. Chuck wagon of the Jinglebob cow outfit on the plains at night, going "over the trail." The wagon is standing with back to audience, harness on front wheels; the wagon bed piled high with bedding. The back of the chuck box is hanging down, and is littered with cooking utensils, baking powder cans, etc. It is just getting dusk when the act opens but later the moon comes up. In the background are mesquite bushes and an endless waste of prairies.* NEWT *takes camp oven off the fire, empties out pan of biscuits and covers them with a cloth.*

NEWT

[*Busying himself about the cooking.*] I clar to goodness, it's about time some of them punchers was comin in to eat. De fust night watch done been gone an hour.

MONTE

Whassa madder, Newt? Gotta all a time sumetin wrong.

NEWT

I don like to cook up a bunch of biscuits, and den have'em all git cold. Come on hyar an help me trow down dis hyar bedding afore dey gits hyar. [*Newt crawls up on wagon and hands down bedding to Monte, who strews it on the ground around the wagon. After this is finished Monte rolls a cigarette and Newt goes on with his cooking.*] How'd you and Faro Jim git along today with the remuda?

MONTE

Purty good, I'll guess. I'll do all a de work. Faro Jim couldn't rad a fer de sheep. Rip's pinto hoss trowed heem tree tams dees mornin.

NEWT

[*Laughing heartily.*] Good fer Pinto. Ah don know what Faro Jim's doin goin over de trail anyway. He don know nothing about punching cows.

MONTE

Naw, but heem know about de Rip. Rip goota de drop on heem one tam an he don forget. Den [*confidingly*] he'll luben fer de leetle Mamie. If Faro Jeem can help, Rip no see Rio Seco no more.

NEWT

He allers seems friendly to Rip.

MONTE

Too dam friendly—just lak de rattlesnake. [*Gets guitar and picks the strings idly, tuning up.* NEWT *works with the cooking.*]

NEWT

Whut's de matter wid Rip, dese days, anyhow?

MONTE

I don know what in hell's de madder wid heem. Don never hear for heem whistle anymore when he rad hees watch—they ain't no more smales in hees face. Guess he ain't gotta bera much for de happiness. [*Sighs and shrugs his shoulders.*] Wal I'll tol fer heem don getta fer de lub. [*Plays and sings Spanish song.*]

NEWT

[*Stops and listens to* MONTE *intently during the singing, then rouses himself after Monte has finished.*] Dat ole music box am a heap o' trouble to ole Newt sometimes, but I reckon it air wuth it after all.

MONTE

Dat's ma bera best frien. [*Plays softly.*]

[SAM, WALT, IKE *and* ROLY *ride up and dismount, unsaddle, turn horses loose and bring saddles and bridles down front, distributing them among the bedding.*]

SAM

[*Boisterously.*] What's that, Mont, homesick again? [*Monte looks at him disdainfully and puts up the guitar.*]

IKE
Air she ready, Newt?

NEWT
Yes, suh—ben ready fer mos half an hour.

SAM
[*Washing.*] Give me a dozen biscuits an a hind quarter.

NEWT
[*Looking up in amazement*] Will ye hev it cooked, suh?

SAM
Well I reckon I could most eat it raw, I'm so blamed hungry, but you mout as well sizzle it a leetle mite.

NEWT
All right, suh.

[*The men are washing, meantime, out of one pan of water which they refill frequently out of a keg on the side of the wagon, two washing at a time. After washing they sit around on bedding and boxes while Newt gives them each a tin plate of victuals.*]

ROLY
Whar you reckon we air at now?

IKE
Well, we're getting out of God's country, anyhow.

WALT
I war prospectin round a bit this mornin an I rid further than I thought. About ten miles east of here I run across a big ranch house. Scrumptious big house and [*enthusiastically*] the purtiest gal you ever sot your eyes on. Reckon she must have come from the city by the way she talks and the fine duds she wears. But she warnt a bit stuck up. Say, you orter see her smile. Every time she smiled at me I felt just like it does when you get throwed good and hard by a bronc an don know just

exactly whar you're goin to light. Her name's Hattie Baird an her old man owns the whole sheebang.

IKE

Cap. Baird's place. We're further along than I reckoned, but then this is the first time I ever travelled this here trail—allers went around the other way.

WALT

I'm goin back that way in the mornin, if you all wants anything.

ROLY

You better take a couple of hours an fix yourself up tonight if you're goin courtin.

SAM

I got a first class pair of checkered pants you can wear if you want ter do it grand. Brought'em along fer just such emergencies. Course they may not just exactly fit you, but I reckon they'll do with a little fixin.

NEWT

Law, honey, I done used them pants tree weeks ago to clean de laterns wid. I didn't spec' you'd need 'em on dis hyar trip.

[*They roll cigarettes while Newt picks up tin plates, cups, etc., and cleans up the chuck board.*]

SAM

Anybody feel lucky tonight?

ROLY

No more cyards fer me. I already owe my month's wages to Faro Jim.

SAM

Ike, 'taint none of my business, I reckon, but I'd like to ask you how in hell you ever got the idea you could make a cow puncher out of Faro Jim.

IKE

I never got no such fool notion in my head. He asked fer a job—said he wanted to go over the trail, and was willin to do any kind of work in order to get the experience, so I give him a job helpin Monte with the horses.

SAM

Don know but what he's more trouble than he is good.

MONTE

[*To Ike.*] Hees no good for nutin. I'll lak a new man for helpin me.

IKE

What's the matter with Faro Jim?

MONTE

I'll lak a for de work, but I don lak vera much doin hees work too.

IKE

He's tryin hard enough, Monte, an he'll improve. Just give him time. Besides he takes his turn on the watch with you, don't he? He's thar now, ain't he?

MONTE

Yes, but when I go back I don know eef de horses be there or not.

[*They sit around on bedding smoking cigarettes. Roly sings, "My Lover is a Cowboy."*

*My lover is a cowboy,*
*He's kind, he's brave, he's true,*
*He rides a Spanish pony*
*And he throws the lasso, too.*
*And when he comes to see me,*
*And our vows we have redeemed,*
*He throws his arms around me*
*And thus begins to sing:*

*I am a jolly cowboy,*
*From Texas now I hail,*
*Give me my saddle and pony,*
*And I'm ready for the trail.*
*I love the rolling prairies,*
*Where I'm free from care and strife,*
*And behind a herd of long-horns,*
*I'll journey all my life.*

IKE

[*After he has finished singing.*] Newt, whar's Rip?

NEWT

Ain't seen him since mornin, suh.

SAM

What are you allers worryin about Rip, fer Ike? Can't he take care of himself?

IKE

Sure; but its my duty to keep track of all of you, ain't it?

ROLY

I found one of Rip's books layin around this mornin, an thinks I to myself, I'll just see what this cuss is readin about all the time that makes him so lonesome and sad like, an what'd you reckon that book was about. [*They all look at him, then at each other.*]

WALT

I pass.

ROLY

"History of Ancient Greece." Now what the devil do you suppose he wants to be spendin his time readin about old grease for?

NEWT

Ah reckon it must hev been dat tub o'butter Ike got me last trip to cook wid. Ah'd like to know dat butter's full history.

SAM

It was come ancient, all right.

WALT

[*Throwing away cigarette and yawning.*] I'd rather sleep any time than read such truck as that.

IKE

[*Sarcastically.*] It don't seem to hurt his usefulness none. He manages to do about as much work and do it as graceful as anybody in the bunch.

RIP

[*Heard singing off tsage.*]

"Oh, bury me not on the lone prai-rie,
Whar the wild coyote shall howl o'er me."

NEWT

Thar he comes now.

SAM

Rip shorely ain't meant for no singer.

WALT

Nope—thats the only song he ever sings, an he's got about four hundred different tunes fer that.

RIP

[*Having unsaddled his horse, comes down stage bringing saddle and bridle.*] Well, Newt,, anything left? I'm as hungry as a bear. [*Throws down saddle and prepares to wash. After washing takes out pocket comb and combs his hair.*]

NEWT

Hungry? For de Lord's sake, what's gwine to happen?

MONTE

Rip gotta de hungry! Huh!

RIP

[*Gets pan of victuals from Newt and sits down to eat.*] This

is some pretty of a night boys. Look at the moon out yonder, shinin down so soft an meller, bathin the sleepin prairie in a flood of golden light. Ain't it all a glorious picture, a fit subject for the hand of a master artist? Why, I could of rid around out yonder all night.

MONTE

[*Motioning to his head.*] Always de pretty night, de stars, de flowers, de birds! Huh! Damn good biscuits, eh Rip?

RIP

Are they? [*Looks at Newt approvingly.*] Well I guess the Jinglebobs' got 'em all skinned fer cookin.

NEWT

An fer eaten too, Ah reckon. [*They all laugh.*]

MONTE

Say, Rip, Pinto ain't been vera nice horse today.

RIP

Up to some of his old tricks, Monte?

MONTE

He trowed Faro Jim tree times today.

RIP

[*After they have finished laughing.*] Well, we must give Faro Jim credit for bein game, anyway. He's allers ready to try again. Its kind of like the time when Bud Wilson's brother, Charley, came over from England on a visit an tried to ride Buckskin. Buckskin was as treacherous as a Mexican. He'd go along as peaceful as a sheep as long as he was walkin, but if you'd start him off any fatser he'd buck blue blazes. Charley had been braggin the night before about how they taught ridin in the ridin schools of "Hengland, doncher know." So we all gathered around to see the big bronco bustin. We were soon disappointed, tho, when Charley crawls on Buckskin and rides off in a walk down into a draw and out of sight. About ten min-

utes later he comes limpin back lookin like he'd been wallerin in the dirt. His purty pants torn, his eye-glass was gone, an he was covered with dust from head to foot. "What's the matter, couldn't you ride him?" says Bud. "Oh, yaas" says Charley, "I could ride 'im alright, but the bloody bugger 'e 'umped 'is back till 'e 'it 'is 'ead, and hi couldn't remain in the seat, you know." [*Laughs all around.*] As long as he was there I never heard Charley bragging again about the ridin schools of "Hengland."

IKE

Too bad we couldn't have the benefit of some of them fancy ridin schools.

RIP

[*Stretching.*] I reckon we'll have to worry along a while longer doin the best we can without 'em.

ROLY

[*To Rip.*] Sam here, is dyin fer a game of cards. Want to get in?

RIP

I reckon not. I don't feel like cyards tonight.

ROLY

[*Stretching.*] Well, if thar ain't goin to be no excitment, I guess I'll roll in. I'm mighty nigh played out.

SAM

I guess I'm ready myself.

NEWT

[*Chuckling to himself.*] 'E 'umped 'is back till 'e 'it 'is 'ed. [*Laughs loudly.*]

IKE

Its time you was gettin some sleep, Walt and you too, Roly, both of you goes on watch at twelve. [*All unroll bedding during this conversation.* IKE *and* RIP *pull beds down stage, left, and unroll them. The boys pull off their boots, take their guns*

*and put under their heads and lie down.*] Rip, I've been wantin to have a word with you fer quite a spell. [*Both roll cigarettes and smoke.*] You ain't seemed like yourself for a long time now —not since—well—

RIP

Not since I was married, is that it, Ike?

IKE

You're on the right drift, boy. [*Slowly.*] Rip, before you come out here thar wasn't nothin I ever keerd for much, but my horse an my gun. They was the only friends I ever found what allers stood by me when I was in a pinch. You're the only real pard I ever had, an since the sunshine has gone from your face, why I'm ridin around all day with a big load on my heart.

RIP

Ike, you're the best pard a man ever had, an I tell you when you're whole nature's tryin to stampede, its mighty good to know you'v got one friend that'll stand by you. I don't know how mean a horse thief feels, but sometimes I think I must feel like one. I tell you its hard to live a lie day after day afore somebody what thinks you're brave, and strong and true. Its hard even when you believe you're doin what's right. Sometimes when I feel her kisses hot on my lips, her lovin arms around my neck, it seems that I can't stand it any longer, cause always at them times, standin just on the edge of the shadows, I see Rose beckonin to me. I forgot, you don't know about Rose. She come into my life down in Texas, down in San Antone. It allers seemed to me she was part of the life to which I belonged. I saw more of her than I ought, until before I realized it, I was in love. Then her father got wind of my feelins an I guess he was plannin somethin better fer her than marryin a cow pnucher, so he took her away from me—back to her fine friends. If she hadn't come into my life first, Ike, I might have been able to do the square thing by Mamie. I thought maybe I'd get over it after I was married, but I guess when a feller once gets branded by love, it won't never wear off.

IKE

Why didn't you tell me this, Rip, we could have done some other way about Mamie, if you loved someone else.

RIP

It wasn't that so much, Ike, because I knew Rose had gone from me forever. The hardest of all was tiein myself down an givin up my ambition.

IKE

I don't know much about this here ambition, nor books, nor the people out thar in the cities. I reckon I've gone my limit now, when I'm the boss of a cow outfit. But I'm older than you be, Rip, my boy, an let me tell you you're on the wrong trail. 'Taint so much what people think of you; 'taint how many people knows yer name, that'll count fer you in the Great Roundup but its whether you've done what's square.

RIP

Do you mean to tell me that you think its square fer me to go on livin a lie to that little gal, to make her think I love her, when the very deceit of it all is killin me? Why every lovin word from her is like a poisoned dagger to me, to stab me an make me feel what a miserable thief I am.

IKE

My boy, you're playin the greatest game of your life. The stake is your happiness, and the happiness of that little gal. Who knows, Rip, that while you think you've been bluffin, some day you'll look again and find that all the time you was holdin a royal flush.

RIP

Who knows, old pal, who knows? Ike, with your friendship to help me, I reckon I could beat any game. [*Stands up and stretches.*] I've worried you enough with my troubles, an now I'm goin to take a walk out thar on the plains an let you rest. I can't sleep tonight, Ike, an when I'm that way the only thing

that does me good is to be alone, alone in the solitude of the prairie. Its kind of satisfyin to me, like a drink of water to a man dyin of thirst. [*gets nearly off, then turns.*] But do you know, Ike, I believe I am holdin that hand you spoke about. All I need is the ace of hearts, an maybe I'll draw that. [*During the last part of his speech* MONTE *has been watching him and as he goes off* MONTE *gets up cautiously, takes lariat and follows him stealthily.*]

IKE

[*Speaking very slowly.*] It seems to me that everythings turned upside down in this old world. The things that are, orten to be, and the things that orten to be, are. Here I've loved Mamie since I first sot eyes on her, altho I knowed she couldn't never care nothin fer me. She thinks thar ain't nothin in the world but Rip, an he can't love her no matter how much he tries. [*Drowsily.*] It seems that he can't be happy with her now, but maybe some day he'll find himself on another trail an that he can't be happy without her. I hope so, I hope so. An I'm goin to show him whar he's wrong an make him love her. [*Throws away cigarette and falls back drowsily. A shot is heard in the distance and* RIP *is heard calling "Ike, Oh, my God, Ike."* IKE *raises up on his elbow.*] Whar was that?

ROLY

[*Springing up.*] Ike, thar's a shot an somebody callin you.

RIP

[*Weaker.*] Ike!

RIP

Its Rip. That's the way he went an he's in trouble too. [*Ike and Roly hurriedly pull on boots. Ike finishes first, claps his hat on his head and hastens out, saying to Roly.*] Come on Roly, wake Newt first and don't forget your gun.

NEWT

[*Wakes up lazily as Roly exits after Ike. Lights a latern and pulls on boots, yawning.*] What's all dis hyar scufflin about—

must be sumthin wrong wid de herd.

[*Roly runs back, kicks sleeping cowboys to waken them.*]

WALT

What's up?

ROLY

What's up? Hell's broke loose, that's what's up. Rip's shot. Git up thar, git up. [*Roly picks up blanket and rushes out. The others get their boots on hurriedly and follow him.*]

NEWT

Oh Lordie, oh Lordie, wonder what's goin to happen to dat boy now. [*Lights lantern and hangs it on chuck board.*] 'Pears lak deys allers sumthin goin wrong wid him, an he ain't neber done nuthin but good either. [*Peers into darkness.*] Laws a massy! Hyar dey comes totin him on a blanket.

[*The boys come in bearing Rip on a blanket. They lay him down on roll of bedding, center.*]

IKE

[*Bending down and examining him.*] He ain't dead yet, fellers—it went too low. Oh, Rip boy, don't you know yer old pard? Speak to me boy, speak to me. [*Looking up.*] He never had a chance, boys, he was shot in the back. Walt, how far did you say it was to that ranch?

WALT

Tween eight and ten miles, I reckon.

IKE

We got to get him thar as quick as we can. We can make it in two or three hours. God knows, though, if we'll get him thar alive. Walt, you saddle up, and make fer that ranch and tell em we're comin, and see if there's any show fer a doctor. Don't let no grass grow under your feet neither.

WALT

[*Hurriedly puts on spurs, picks up saddle, bridle and blanket.*] I'll just tote my saddle over to the rialto an git a hoss and go on

from thar. An ef thar's a doctor in thirty miles of here he'll be with Rip afore sunup.

IKE

Roly, you and Newt hitch up the mules and fix up a soft bed in the wagon. An somebody must git on the trail of this killer.

SAM

They's only one person it could have been.

IKE

And that is—

SAM

Faro Jim.

IKE

By God, he wouldn't dare. He wouldn't have no chance to git away.

SAM

He'd kill him an then take his chances on gittin away.

[*Scuffling is heard off stage. Monte comes in pushing Faro Jim in front of him. Faro Jim is bound tightly with a rope, which is wound round him, pinning his arms to his side. Monte begins unwinding rope. Faro Jim shows no fear, but is defiant.*]

IKE

What does this mean, Monte.

MONTE

[*Still unwinding rope.*] I see Rip start out alone to tak a de walk. I don lak fer dat so I'll getten up an foller fer heem. I walk a de leetle slow, fer I lose heem. I close a de rialto when I hear de shot. I run toward de shot an I see a man runnin to me on foot. I hide behind mesquite boosh an when he come by I catch heem in rope, queek—lak dis. He try to get hees gun, but I jerk heem down, an den I wrap de rope aroun heem lak

dees. [*He is down to noose.*] Dis de way I catch heem, see?

SAM

The dam Injun. He follered Rip and shot him and war runnin fer his hoss when Monte spys him.

MONTE

[*To* FARO JIM.] Today I'll say a you lak de rattlesnake. Wal, I lie—the rattlesnake he always mak a de noise before he strike. [MONTE *takes rope off,* FARO JIM *makes dive for his gun.*]

FARO JIM

You dam Greaser!

IKE

[*Shoving gun against* FARO JIM'S *stomach.*] Not so quick, Faro Jim—jest hold yer hosses. An meantime, say yer prayers, cause when we breaks camp here, right yonder on the spot whar Rip fell we'll leave your dirty carcass fer the wolves and the coyotes.

CURTAIN

## ACT IV

*On the Baird ranch, three months later. Showing the back yard of a Western ranch house. Porch running entire back of stage. Woman's saddle hanging on porch. Mexican oyah, or water cooler, hanging near door. Light wagon down left with harness hanging on front wheel. Pump and long, rude watering trough, right. Windmill instead of pump, if feasible.* CHIQUITE *discovered on porch churning with old fashioned churn,*

JOE

[*Enters hurriedly with lariat coiled over his arm. Stops suddenly when he sees* CHIQUITE, *and debates with himself for a moment whether to stop or to finish the errand on which he had started. With evident embarrassment.*] Howdy—Chiquite.

CHIQUITE

[*Churning and hardly noticing him.*] Mornin Joe.

JOE

How air you this mornin? [*Bashfully.*] Yer lookin fust rate.

CHIQUITE

My disposition ain't as good as my looks, then.

JOE

[*As sudden impulse strikes him, throws his lariat into wagon and goes hurriedly to porch.*] Couldn't I give you a lift on that churnin?

CHIQUITE

If you're a mind to, I don't care.

JOE

[*Tenderly.*] You know, Chiquite, I don't like to see you doin sich hard work.

CHIQUITE

You needn't worry. I hain't hurtin myself none. [*Takes up*

*broom and starts to sweep.*] Doc Joiner was here today and he says Rip is well enough to ride now, so he is goin to leave today.

JOE

[*Churning viciously.*] I'm damn glad of it.

CHIQUITE

You are, are you! You're jealous—that's what's the matter with you.

JOE

Who wouldn't be—you hardly ever have a word fer me any more—er a smile, either. Guess I'll have to go out and git shot, er sumthin, so as to git laid up and nussed. You women always like a sick man best.

CHIQUITE

[*Hotly.*] You're a yearlin, you are. Don't you know he's married?

JOE

Yes, an I know them married devils is the ones you got to look out fer—they got the experience.

CHIQUITE

Well, you ain't no need to be jealous of him—I've got somethin else to do besides smilin and smirkin around at you all the time. [*With pride.*] I'm learnin to cook now, an I baked a cake today.

JOE

I'm much obleeged to you fer tellin me. I ain't never been knowed as a coward, but they's some things I jest naturally ain't goin to tackle, an that cake's one of them.

CHIQUITE

[*Tauntingly.*] You'll never die with barvery, anyway. You won't even wear a necktie when I ask you to.

JOE

[*Stops churning and looks at her steadily.*] See here, that's

too much. You're gettin too high falutin here lately anyhow. You want to make a regular dude out o' me. I'll fight any man on this here ranch fer you, Chiquite, but I'm damned if I'm goin to hav the fellers give me the horse laugh about wearin little ribbons around my neck, and combin my hair, an shavin every week; first thing I know you'll be wantin me to black my boots every mornin before I go out fer the day's work.

HATTIE

[*Enters from left, wearing riding costume.*] What in the world are you doing out here, Chiquite? You know you have a lot of work to do before cousin Rose comes.

CHIQUITE

I was just doin the churnin when Joe come by.

HATTIE

[*Pulls off gloves and looks in churn.*] Well, the butter's come now so you can take it in the house and finish.

JOE

[*Looking at* CHIQUITE.] That's the way—lay it all on me. I guess you wasn't willin I should stop.

CHIQUITE

If I was very anxious, I could see a lot more of you than I do. [*Picks up churn and goes into the house.*]

JOE

That's a hot shot—an there was some truth in it too.

HATTIE

[*Jokingly.*] Don't take it too hard, Joe. You'll find out some day that women don't mean everything they say; and then, you know the course of true love never runs smooth.

JOE

I reckon the course I'm follerin is purty rocky, all right. Say, Miss Hattie, [*much embarrassed*] couldn't you say a good word fer me now an then?

HATTIE

Why yes, Joe, I'll do all I can for you, but in my opinion its a mighty poor puncher that has to hire some one to break their bronc for them.

JOE

I know it, but it seems like I can't never git clost enough to git the bridle on.

BAIRD

[*Enters from right.*] What you bunch of two-year-olds doin out here. Spoonin, eh? [*Goes on porch and takes drink out of oyah.*] I never thought much of daylight fer sparkin—give me the moonlight.

HATTIE

Father! [JOE *is much embarrassed.*]

BAIRD

[*Wiping his mouth.*] Look at Joe now—look at that face, red as a pickled beet.

HATTIE

Joe will you unsaddle my horse and turn him into the pasture? I won't need him any more today.

BAIRD

Will he! of course he will, an tickled to death. [*Laughs heartily.* JOE *is evidently glad to get away and leaves hurriedly.*]

HATTIE

What made you say that, father? You didn't really mean it, did you?

BAIRD

[*Much amused.*] Of course not, little girl, of course not. I just like to devil that cuss because he's so all-fired bashful.

HATTIE

When you came he was just asking me to help him out with Chiquite.

BAIRD

Oh-ho! Them two kids. Well he'll have to ride a fast horse to corral her, and he'll have to have a good stout lasso to hold her when he does get her. Well, little gal, is everything ready an waitin fer your cousin's visit?

HATTIE

Yes, everything is ready. I know she'll think its lonely out here, after coming from the city.

BAIRD

[*With concern.*] You didn't feel that way when you come back from school, did you?

HATTIE

You know how glad I was to get back, dear old dad. But its different with me—I loved the West long before I ever saw a drawing room. The sweet flowers of the valleys, the early morning rides, the wild free air, the hand clasp of friends that you know are true—isn't that better than the dirty crowded streets, where you smother for a breath of fresh air? Why dad, I'd rather be your little wild western girl than any petted queen of society.

BAIRD

[*Visibly affected.*] Ah, you're your daddy's own gal. I knowed you was one that even college education couldn't spoil. But I'm afraid your cousin's a different kind, an that she's goin to be hard to please. Her father says she ain't never been the same since she fell in love with that puncher the time they was down in Texas.

HATTIE

If she's interested in cow boys she ought to be amused here. We can show her almost any kind.

RIP

[*Comes on from right, carrying a roll of bedding which he throws down on porch. Takes off hat.*] Good ev'nin, Miss Hattie. Howdy, Mr. Baird.

BAIRD

Hello, Rip, how are you feelin?

HATTIE

Good evening, Rip.

RIP

I'm feelin strong today—like myself again. Doc says I'm well enough to ride now, so I guess I'll leave today.

BAIRD

Today! What you startin this time of day for. It'll be dark in a couple of hours. Better wait till mornin an get an early start.

RIP

Doc says I'm not strong enough to ride in the hot sun, so I'm travellin a few hours in the early night until I gain a little strength.

BAIRD

Rip, I'm sorry you can't stay with us, but [*jokingly*] I suppose you're gettin anxious to see that young un you got the news about. The letter said somethin bout his lookin just like his daddy. Wasn't that it? [*Laughs boisterously.*]

RIP

Of course I'm anxious to get home—then I've been a burden to you and Miss Hattie long enough. Mr. Baird, I don't know how I can ever repay you an Miss Hattie for what you've done fer me. I've been here pretty near three months, now, and I'd like to know how much I owe you.

BAIRD

Why, young feller, you don't owe me nothin. I ain't runnin no hospital here. I'm runnin a cow ranch. But if anybody gets hurt, or sick, why then they gets the best on this here ranch. an no questions asked. An you ain't been no burden either—we don't want you to go away feelin like that. [*Starts to go in*

*house, gets on porch and turns.*] Well, I reckon I'll see you again before you go—that is, if you don't get too all-fired anxious to see that kid.

[RIP *bows to him and laughs.*]

HATTIE

We're glad to have been able to help you Rip, I only wish we could have done more for your comfort.

RIP

You couldn't have done more. Your nursin an care saved my life. I reckon I come pretty near passin over, anyway.

HATTIE

Yes, you've had a close call. But oh, how glad I am to be sending you back to your wife and little baby. She'll hardly know you, looking so pale and thin.

RIP

I'll be lookin better when I get home. I got a good long ride ahead of me. That ought to bring some of the color back.

CHIQUITE

[*Looks out from door.*] Miss Hattie, will you come an help me with those biscuits? I'm afraid I'll spoil 'em.

HATTIE

I guess Chiquite will never learn. She'd make a better cow boy than a cook. [*Goes up toward porch.*] I'll have to go and show her. When are you going, Rip?

RIP

I'm most ready now. It may be an hour before I get away, tho.

HATTIE

If the buckboard gets here before you go, you'll get to see my cousin. I wish you wasn't going so soon, and you would have an opportunity of knowing her. [*Banteringly.*] You never saw a

real live city girl, did you? She's one. Beautiful, educated, and stuck up. But I've heard she's not afraid of cow boys.

RIP

I'd be glad to know her, but I must get away as soon as possible. [*Exit* HATTIE. RIP *now ties up bundle of clothing in tarpaulin.*] An I'm goin back at last. Its a new feelin to me, but somehow or other I'm glad. Yes, I'll be glad to see Mamie again—and the little boy. I reckon its that that makes the change in me—seems like there's somethin sorter holds me and Mame together together now. [*Strolls out slowly stops at pump.*] Wonder if it does look like me. [*Exit right.*]

CHIQUITE

[*Comes to door.*] It's about time that buckboard was comin! [*Walks out and looks down the road.*] There it comes now, just on top of the hill. [*Runs back to porch.*] Miss Hattie, Miss Hattie.

HATTIE

[*From house.*] Yes.

CHIQUITE

[*Excitedly.*] They're coming!

HATTIE

[*Appears in door with father.*] They're on time, for a wonder. Come father. [*Together they go out to meet the stage, which is heard to come up noisily and driver calls out "Whoa." They reappear, with* BAIRD *with his arm over* ROSE'S *shoulder;* HATTIE *carrying traveling bag.*]

BAIRD

We're plum glad to see you again, Rosie gal. You've almost growed out of my recollection. You warn't nothin but a spindlin little shaver in short dresses in them days.

ROSE

Oh, if I only enjoy it as much as I did then, Uncle Baird, and I know I will.

HATTIE

Why, Rose, I've been worrying for a week for fear you'd find it lonesome and tiresome out here.

ROSE

Of course I won't be lonesome. We'll have the best of good times. You haven't changed a bit, little cousin. And Uncle Baird is just as jolly and fat as ever.

BAIRD

I can't say you're lookin very well—too peeked like—kinder like our sick man. But you'll soon get some color in them cheeks and you won't have to put it on with a brush either.

HATTIE

Come on Rose, don't listen to him—he's always teasing.

[*They go into the house.* JOE *and the driver appear carrying trunk, which is covered with dust, as is also the driver. They carry the trunk into the house.* SANDY *reappears from the house, brushing the dust off himself with his gloves.* JOE *follows him.*]

JOE

She's a stunner ain't she—kind of a sky-scraper and moon-fixer and cloud-roller, by gum.

SANDY

[*Pugnaciously.*] Now you jest leave her alone, savvy? I saw her first. You got Chiquite corraled now, so she won't look at any of the rest of us, and I'm damned if I'm goin ter stand by an see you grab on ter everything that strays this way.

JOE

Don't loose yer disposition, now, Sandy, old horse. When it comes to gals they ain't none of 'em in it with Chiquite. This new one might be a whole lot fer pretty, I ain't denyin that, but she wasn't made fer life out here on the plains. Now just fer argument, supposin you was to take a bunch of fancy horses,

we'll say like the bay mare Cap got from Kansas City last week, and put 'em out on the roundup just onct, what do you suppose would happen to 'em? Why they'd look like a bunch of skinned jack rabbits—what was left of 'em.

SANDY

You allers was better'n me fer argument. I don know nothin about women, anyhow. I know she looks scrumptious to me, whether she suits anybody else or not.

JOE

You must have been grazin on a patch of loco. She ain't goin have nothin to do with you.

SANDY

The hell she ain't! I'll show you. You think cause my legs is warped, an my hair is sandy, an I'm crosseyed and got freckles, that she wouldn't take up with me, huh? I ain't much fer purty—I know that, but show me the man that can ride better'n me, or rope better, or shoot straighter! Tote 'em out, will you?

JOE

Course looks don't count fer everything, but a feller's got to have a little somethin in his favor.

SANDY

Well, you jest watch my smoke. But this ain't brandin them calves. We can talk about the gals when we ain't got nothin else to do. [*Both exit, right.*]

ROSE

[*Comes on porch from house.*] Oh, how good it seems to breathe again the free air of the plains; to be where one can see the sun rise and set; to leave behind everything tawdry and artificial and to be simply one's self. How it takes me back to the old days, and to him! I wonder if he ever gives a thought to his poor unhappy Rose. Oh, Rip, Rip—everything to remind me of him. Even that cowboy leaving the corral rides just as he did, the same way of holding the reins, like a cavalryman, and

not like a cowboy. [RIP *is heard singing, "Bury me not etc." Rides up to pump, dismounts, and throws bridle over pump. Then for the first time he notices* ROSE, *who with a startled expression in her face, walks toward him. They pause and look at each other a moment, then a swift, mutual recognition follows.*] It *is* Rip.

RIP

Rose, my Rose. [*They run into each others arms.*]

ROSE

[*Looking up into his face, his arms around her.*] Oh, Rip, they couldn't keep me away from you always, could they? It seemed all along as tho I was coming to you, Rip. The separation has been so long, and oh, so hard to bear, but the great joy of seeing you again is worth all the tears and the heartaches.

RIP

[*Slowly.*] Somehow, Rose I've always had a feelin that the trails we were travelin would cross—that some day I was goin to see you again. But in all my dreams I never saw it like this—I never reckoned you could care anything fer me.

ROSE

I could never tell you how I have loved you, how I have longed for you, and what this separation has meant to me. I haven't known a real happy day for five years. But now we can laugh at all that, for you are mine, all mine, and you shall never leave me again.

RIP

I didn't suppose you would ever think of me again, after what your father told you about me.

ROSE

After he saw how I lovel you, and that I wouldn't forget, he told me the truth—that you allowed him to say those things about you because you thought it meant my happiness.

RIP

And you would have taken me in spite of all he said?

ROSE

[*Very earnestly.*] I would have given up everything else in the world for you, if I had only known you really loved me. Father knew it too—everybody knew it but you, you who should have seen it first of all.

RIP

I learned a long time ago not to throw the rope until I was sartin sure I was in ropin distance, an I was afraid of tryin to rope you too soon. Pears like, however, I didn't measure the distance right.

ROSE

And they used to say you had the surest eye of anybody on the ranch.

CHIQUITE

[*From house.*] Miss Rose. [*They step apart as* CHIQUITE *sticks her head out of window.*] Miss Hattie says to come and get ready for supper. It will be ready soon.

ROSE

Coming now. [CHIQUITE *disappears.*] Well, I must leave you for a while, Rip. I can't bear to let you out of my sight again, but I'll see you at supper. And, Rip, [*coyly*] this is going to be a lovely night for a moonlight ride.

RIP

Yes, a lovely night. [*Rose walks over to porch, and as she reaches the door, she turns at his call.*] Rose, don't say anything to them about me, just yet. Wait a little while.

ROSE

All right, Mr. Bashful.

RIP

[*Stands a moment looking after her, walks down to wagon,*

*lays both arms on it and buries his head in them. Then he seems to realize for the first time what he has done.*] God, what am I thinking of. Am I gone plum loco? [*Passes hands over his forehead.*] And yet, would a traveler on the plains in a blizzard, refuse the shelter of a warm ranchhouse after he had spent long fearful days lookin fer it? No more will I throw away her love when I've been starvin fer it fer years. Oh, I reckon I'm the biggest coward that ever rode a horse or carried a gun. The more she talked, the further I got away from tellin her. How she'll despise me when she finds me out—and her so good and pure. How I hate myself. But when I saw her, I seemed to ferget—to ferget that she can't never be anything to me now—to ferget how things have changed since I saw her last. And she loves me! When I think of that I'm afraid of myself—afraid that love will win. Oh, I won't give her up; I'll take her away this very night, away where nobody knows us, and then my dreams will come true. With her help and love to spur me on, I can climb higher up the ladder than I ever dreamed of going. And there's my horse already saddled; a few minutes longer and I would have been gone—I'd never have seen her. God, what's got into me today. What a selfish, sneakin, theivin coyote I am—thinkin of nobody but myself. She wouldn't look at me nohow if she knew I had let her go on tellin me of her love and I told her of mine when I hadn't the right to. I can't see her again, cause if I do I'll go plum loony. I reckon the best and quickest way to get out of it, is to go now. [*picks up bundle, starts toward horse, then turns back and throws it down on steps.*] No, I'm damned if I do. I ain't never been afraid of my self before and I ain't goin sneakin away like no Injun. I'll play this game, and I'll play it to win!

CHIQUITE

[*Coming out on porch.*] Why, Mr. Rip, you ain't goin till after supper, are you?

RIP

I don't feel like eatin tonight. Would you tell Rose—I—I

mean Miss Hattie's cousin—I'd like to speak to her a few minutes.

CHIQUITE

You don't know her already, do you?

RIP

[*Picking up lariat.*] Not exactly, only I was showin her how to tie some knots out here a while ago, an I thought maybe I'd better show her how to undo 'em before I go.

CHIQUITE

Why I could show her that, myself. I can untie any knot I ever saw.

RIP

[*Roughly.*] Well, this ain't in your line.

CHIQUITE

You needn't get mad about it. Seems like you're in an awful hurry. She's likely to stay here some time, you know.

RIP

I'm not tho.

CHIQUITE

I hadn't thought of that. I'll tell her anyway. Adios. [*Exit.*]

RIP

I'd rather fight a bunch of Indians on the war path than to tell her what I've got to. But she might just as well know what a cur I am—then she won't be sorry when I'm gone.

ROSE

[*Comes from house.*] Did you send for me, Rip?

RIP

[*With effort.*] Yes, there's something I want to tell you before I go away.

ROSE

[*Startled.*] Going away! You don't mean that, Rip.

RIP

I want to tell you that I am a low down, sneakin—

ROSE

Why, Rip, don't you love me?

RIP

Don't I love you—don't I love you? Why I've loved you with all the power of my wild nature since I first saw you. For five years as I've ridden my weary watch at night, the prairie winds have whispered to me your name; as I've laid out upon the plains with my saddle for a pillow, through the lonliness and desolation I've heard your voice calling to me, and through the darkness your laughing eyes smiled upon me. No matter where I've gone, no matter how rough the trail I've traveled, the memory of those happy days was with me always. But now that the cup of happiness for which I longed and prayed is almost to my lips, I cannot drink.

ROSE

[*Frightened.*] You cannot! How strangely you talk—as though there was some great, impassable gulf between us. I love you Rip, what else do you ask?

RIP

Sit down, and I'll tell you it all. Nothin ever went right with me—I never had any real happiness to speak of, and I reckon I never will have. My trail allers led into the canyons, where the sun never reaches; but once for a little time I rode out into the valley whar the flowers was bloomin and the birds singin sweetest music. That was the three months I knew you, Rose. But the sun went down and never rose again; the flowers withered and died, the birds quit singin and I found myself back in a canyon with the walls as high as the sky and that run on forever an ever. After I left San Antone I went up into New Mexico till I camped at a settlement they callls Rio Seco. I hadn't been there more than a week till a horse falls on me and mighty nigh kills me. An old man that had moved out West

on account of his lungs, and his daughter come along and found me; they took me to their house and cared for me like I belonged to them. They were true friends, and the old man taught me lots of things that seemed to draw us together; and the little gal, she war just like a sister to me. Three years after that the old man died, and he made a dyin request that I should marry his daughter. I, thinkin I'd never see you again, I married her. I hope you'll think as good as you can of me for not tellin you awhile ago, but for a moment I forgot it all—I saw only you, my Rose, and my love for you blotted out everything else in the world.

ROSE

Rip, I love you because you are a big, strong man. When I went down there five years ago, I was tired of the shallowness of the world in which I lived, of the vain flatteries of the men who knew nothing but fine words of deceit. And you were all that they were not—you were strong and brave, and you were just what you were, nothing more, and so I gave you my heart.

RIP

Don't talk that way, Rose. Tell me I'm a rattlesnake, a thief—anything but that. It only makes it harder for me to go.

ROSE

Going! You are not going, Rip. If you do, I'm going with you. Do you think I intend to give up my life's happiness like this. Have I loved you through all these years, longed for you, lived for you alone, to give you up now because I find that in an impulsive moment of gratitude you have bound yourself to a woman you do not love. You love me, Rip, you must love me, or I shall die.

RIP

[*Surprised and hurt.*] I love you yes, but we can't do what you say—it ain't the square thing.

ROSE

[*Pleadingly.*] Does right always prevail when a great happiness is concerned? Do we quibble over a little ques-

tion of right when a great overwhelming love like ours is in the balance?

RIP

[*Trying to convince her of the right way.*] What a sneakin coyote I'd be. I wouldn't be thinkin of anybody but myself. What of those friends that believe in me—of Old Ike, who'd stake his life on me. And what of poor little Mamie, who believes above all else that I'm a man—and what of the little boy that will grow up without a father's care. And you couldn't really like me Rose if I showed myself to be that selfiish.

ROSE

[*Earnestly.*] Don't think of them now—think of me, of my enduring love for you, of what I have suffered all these years. You were mine before you were theirs—you must be mine now, Rip. I am rich, we can go far away, where no one will know us and live forever in the joy of each other's love.

RIP

[*Sternly.*] You're excited, gal. You don't know what you are saying. Why if I was to do this thing, I'd have to kill what little good there is in me—I'd never be able to look an honest man in the face again. I'd have to throw away my manhood for my own selfish aims and desires, and I can't do it, I can't do it. Think of the disgrace it would bring to that little woman down there, and to the fatherless boy.

ROSE

[*passionately.*] I am thinking of everything, but I care for nothing—nothing only to know that you love me and have you for my very own.

RIP

Think what your friends would say—what the world would think of you. I tell you, gal, you ain't yourself.

ROSE

What is the opinion of the world to me in comparison to

your love? [*Pleadingly.*] Oh, take me Rip, I am yours, body and soul.

RIP

[*Clasping her hands roughly.*] Don't talk like that, Rose, for if you do really mean that,, you are not the woman I love—the idol I have worshipped through all these years is shattered at my feet.

ROSE

[*Crying.*] Surely the greatness of my love does not make you angry with me?

RIP

[*Slowly.*] Not angry, no. I only see that for five years I have been chasing a mirage like a madman, when a spring of livin water was right at my feet. I have carried the memory of a pretty smilin face in my heart, forgetting that there must also be a heart that is pure and good. We air rough and uncultured out yonder. We don't know much about style and we care less, but we prize our honor above everything, and for the honor of our women we would lay down our lives.

ROSE

[*Wildly.*] You shall not leave me this way, Rip. I will invent some lie to tell them that will keep you. I will tell them that I knew you in Texas for a horse thief or a murderer. I will tell them the truth—anything only to keep you for a while, until this fever of morality and heroics that is upon you has passed away.

RIP

Call them, if you will, but when you do, call them all, for now that there's a new light come into my life, [*walks over and throws bridle over his horses head*] they ain't enough men on this here ranch to keep me away from them that loves me—and them that I love.

[RIP *is preparing to mount, looking at* ROSE, *while she is stand-*

*ing right, center, with arms outstretched toward him as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

*Curtain raises again and* ROSE *is leaning on wagon sobbing, while* RIP *mounts and rides away.*

SECOND CURTAIN

## ACT IV

ROOM *in* RIP'S *house, Rio Seco. The room is furnished in good taste, but the furniture is of a crude Western sort, consisting of a table in front of fireplace, large arm chair between it and fireplace, two straight backed chairs, and a baby's cradle. Door in right, flat, and door left, upper. In the flat, left, is a wide deep window, with heavy curtains hanging even with wall. The fireplace is large and made of stone, and is located down right. As the curtain rises* MAMIE *is discovered sitting in the rocker near the fireplace reading;* MARIA *seated in chair beside cradle rocking it gently, crooning softly to baby.*

MAMIE

Is he asleep, Maria?

MARIA

Si, senora. [*Rises and looks at baby intently.*] Pore leetel baby.

MAMIE

Why poor little baby, Maria?

MARIA

Hees papa no come fer heem.

MAMIE

Your people think you have the power of second sight, Maria, but whatever you say, and no matter how much you shake your head, I know that Rip will come back soon.

MARIA

How you know?

MAMIE

How do I know it? Why, as I know the sun will set tonight, Maria. I feel it. Didn't you ever just feel that hings were going to happen? And then when Long John from the Circle Diamonds passed by the place in Kansas where they are taking care of Rip they told him Rip would get well again. And I know that he will

come soon, Maria, for I dreamed last night that I saw him open the door, and enter, and hang up his gun on the peg yonder and then his hat over it—just as he always did. And you know you yourself believe in dreams, Maria.

MARIA

Ah hopa dat dream come true, but Ah don know, Ah don know.

MAMIE

The stage came in late last night, Maria, and we haven't asked for the mail yet. Won't you go over and see, for I know we shall hear from him today.

MARIA

Si, senora, Ah go see. [*Gets shawl and throws it over her head.*] Always looken fer de letter dat never comes. Pobrecito. [*Exit door flat.*]

MAMIE

Oh, if I could only hear from him. No news since the Circle Diamonds came home, and that's been two months now. I only live from one week to another waiting for the stage, and it always brings me disappoitnment. Getting mail out here is only a game of chance after all. Maybe he got worse after the Circle Diamonds left. Oh, my poor boy, so near to death, and so far away from friends and home, and me not able to go to him. If I could only have been there to nurse him and care for him, he would have been well long ago—I know he would. [*Loud scuffling of feet outside and knock at door.* MAMIE *opens it.*] Why, boys, come in. [IKE, SAM, WALT, ROLY *and* MONTE *enter.*] Its been a long, long time since you came to see me. [*Shakes hands with each of them.*] I'm always glad to see Rip's friends.

WALT

Your friends, too, Miss Mamie.

MAMIE

Yes, I know that, boys. But this time I think you came to see

someone else beside me. You came to see the baby, didn't you?

IKE

The boys 'lowed as how they never seen a white kid afore so I fetched 'em over. [*Points to cradle.*] Thar it is, an its the first white kid born in Lincoln county. [MAMIE *pushes back covers and they crowd around and look at it.*]

ROLY

[*Gallantly.*] I hope it won't be the last, ma'am. [MAMIE *looks confused and* IKE *gives* ROLY *a punch in the ribs. He sees he has said something out of place, and makes it worse by trying to right himself.*] Er—that is I hope we all have one some day—that is—whole herds of'em.

SAM

[*Aside to* ROLY.] Shet up. [ROLY *gets behind others, trying to hide himself.*]

WALT

[*Aside to* MAMIE.] Has it been branded yet?

MAMIE

No, we're waiting for Rip to do that.

SAM

[*To* WALT, *who has drifted down stage with him.*] Pore little cuss, looks like he might be a Maverick all his life if he waits fer Rip ter brand him. [MAMIE, IKE *and* SAM *talk among themselves about the baby, while* MONTIE, ROLY *and* WALT *come down right and discuss the situation aside.*]

WALT

Kids may be all right, but they shore ain't the handsomest pieces of furniture in the world.

ROLY

Does look purty onery to have such a good lookin ma.

WALT

I never seed anybody with a compextion like that, less they

was hittin the booze purty strong.

ROLY

[*Confidentially.*] I'll bet a hoss ole Maria feeds it whiskey.

MONTE

Huh! I'll guessen de leetle buby smell for Maria's breath.

WALT

An they ain't no more hair on its head than they is on the horn of my saddle.

SAM

What's the matter with you fellers, scairt?

ROLY

Shore not, I'm powerful fond of kids myself. Course I ain't never had a chance to get acquainted with 'em much—'ceptin Mexican kids.

WALT

[*Gives a vicious poke at baby.*] Laugh, you little son-of-a-gun, laugh. [MAMIE *steps toward cradle with an exclamation of fright, and* IKE *grabs* WALT *by the arm and turns him around roughly.*[

IKE

You big cow, you ain't brandin calves.

WALT

I warn't really goin to touch it.

MONTE

You mak a fer de vera fine bluff.

SAM

Take it up and hold it in your arms, Roly.

ROLY

[*Grins.*] Me? Shaw, I might bust it. Let Monte.

MONTE

Cristo! Mebbe I drop heem! No signor, not for dis Mexican, tank you plees.

WALT

[*Showing signs of nervousness.*] Well, we don't seem to be hardly no use around here—reckon we'd better be driftin.

MONTE

[*Quickly.*] Lets getta for de beeg drink.

SAM

You'll never take a little one, that's sure. [*All get ready to leave.*]

MAMIE

Come back again, boys.

WALT

You bet we will, Ma'am, if you'll ax us.

ROLY

An say, we done decided what we're goin to give him fer Christmas.

MAMIE

Christmas, why that's a long time yet.

ROLY

Well, there's nothin like bein prepared. We got a white burro fer him and we sent to Vegas to have a little saddle made.

MAMIE

How nice of you—I know he'll think it's fine.

[ROLY, WALT, SAM *and* MONTE *exit.* MAMIE *and* IKE *look at each other a moment, then burst out laughing.*]

IKE

Their hearts are in the right place, only they jest naturally ain't got no sense ceptin about ridin a horse, or punchin cows.

[*Bursts out laughing again.*] Gettin a burro an a saddle fer a kid like that.

MAMIE

Ike, I'm so glad you came over and brought them. I've been worrying today and I needed something to cheer me up.

IKE

Why, bless you, what's worryin you? About Rip? [MAMIE *nods her head in assent..*] Well get on your things now, fer I'm goin to take you out fer a walk.

[*Enter* MARIA *door in flat.*]

MAMIE

[*Puts on hat and light shawl.*] Any mail, Maria?

MARIA

No, signora.

MAMIE

[*To* IKE.] Why do you suppose he does not write, Ike? Do you think he got worse after the Circle Diamonds were there.

IKE

[*Jokingly.*] Well, a sight of that bunch ain't calculated to help a man much. But then I wouldn't put too much store on this letter business. I don't think you'll ever get a letter from Rip, but just as soon as he's able to crawl onto a horse, he'll be ridin this way, an don't you fergit it.

MAMIE

Ike, you are the one friend who can always dispel the clouds, no matter how black they are. I feel more cheerful already. I believe I'll just be expecting him any minute.

IKE

That's right, little gal. You keep your faith steady in Rip, an I'll give you my word on it, he won't disappoint you.

[MAMIE *and* IKE *exit door in flat.* MARIA *looks at baby, fixes*

*coverings takes bottle of whiskey out of pocket of dress and takes long drink, then exits, left upper.*]

RIP

[*Enters from door in flat, walks slowly, takes off his gun and hangs it up on peg, his hat over it. Walks down by fireplace.*] Home again! It seems like an age since I last hung my gun and hat up there—all the world has changed for me since then. I don't feel like a Maverick, now; I ain't a stranger in my own home no more; I ain't bound to stay here by no promises, but just because I love little Mamie and my home. I don't deserve her, but I'm goin to try an make myself worthy of her. Its like Ike says, the thing to make a man happy is just bein square. [*Walks to window, raises shade and on his way back discovers baby.*] Thar it is! [*Goes to window and pulls back curtains to get better light, then turns back cover gently and looks at baby for a moment. Straightens up.*] Mame warn't payin me such a hell of a compliment when she said it looked like me. Don't look like nothin I ever seen before. [*Looks at it again.*] It sorter makes me have a funny feelin, tho. Won't it be great when he gets big enough to ride around with his dad? I'd like to take him up in my arms, but I reckon I don't know much about this business. Oh, how different life's goin to be for me now. My happiness has come at last, and I don't deserve it, either.

MONTE

[*Pushes open door quickly, looks around the room and comes in stealthily.*] Mr. Rip, ma good fren Rip.

RIP

Well, old Mont, you look just the same as ever. How'd you know I was here? I tried to slip in so nobody would see me.

MONTE

I see you tie your horse in de corral, an I come here queek. Rip I'll gotta de dam bad news for you.

RIP

[*Excited.*] Not Mamie! She's not sick? Whar is she?

MONTE

Yes, about a de Mamie, but she's not seek.

RIP

Then out with it, Monte, out with it.

MONTE

Well, Ike he love for de long time de little Mamie. I guess him an Mamie tink you don come home no more, so dey all de time together now. Ike hees takin her ridin every day—dey gone for de walk now.

RIP

And is that the only reason that you dare to question my wife? Just because he takes her out? Ike is my friend, and her friend. He's only taking care of her and comforting her in my absence.

MONTE

I wish by damn me dat was de only reason I tink so.

RIP

[*Choking with emotion.*] Well—what else?

MONTE

Two times when he bring her back from de ride, Maria see heem kiss her.

RIP

[*Half to himself.*] My God, is it so? [*Turns on Monte fiercely.*] Monte, damn you, you lie. [*Grasps* MONTE'S *shoulders with both hands and shakes him.*] She is my wife, do you understand—my wife, and Ike is my best friend—the best friend I ever had. [*Laughing hysterically.*] It isn't so, do you hear me, it isn't so—it can't be true.

MONTE

Well, I tell you because I tink you want to know—and because you are my fren.

RIP

See here, Monte, I am your friend. And I've done you a good turn, once or twice, and I want you to keep your mouth shut about this. Have you told any one else?

MONTE

Nobody know but me an Maria, an I tell her eef she talk I'll fix her.

RIP

Then don't you ever mention it to a living soul, do you understand? If you do [*puts his hand on gun*] savvy? [MONTE *nods in the affirmative.*] Then go. [MONTE *goes to door and turns pleadingly to* RIP *who relents, walks over to* MONTE, *grasps his hand and puts left hand on his shoulder. They look into each others eyes steadily then* MONTE *turns and leaves.* RIP *turns slowly as tho dazed by what has happened, and comes down front.*] A Maverick still—always a Maverick. I can't blame her, tho, I've never been square with her. And I reckon he must have told her about Rose. But it had to be Ike, my friend. [*Vehemently.*] By God, I'll kill him. [*Stops thoughtfully.*] But why should I? I told him I didn't love her and never could—that I loved another woman. Well, I followed the mirage too long, and now I've come back to the real spring to slake my thirst, and find that it has run dry. There is no happiness for me in life, but I won't spoil their happiness. [*Puts on hat and buckles gun around his waist.*] He's a better man than I am anyhow, and he deserves her. I never did. [*Walks down to cradle and bends over baby tenderly.*] Good bye, little feller, you can't never grow up to be your daddy's pal, but maybe you'll have a better pal. And I hope they call you Rip. Pore little Maverick. [*Noise heard outside. Steps up to window and looks out.*] Mamie and Ike! They mustn't see me—they mustn't know I've ever been here. [*Steps behind curtains and draws them together as* MAMIE *and* IKE *enter.*]

IKE

[*Both hands on* MAMIE'S *shoulders, and looking into her eyes.*]

Now, little gal, I've got a great big secret to tell you.

MAMIE

A secret?

IKE

Yes, a secret—just for you an me. Things are all settled on the ranch now, and I'm goin to bring Rip back.

MAMIE

[*Delighted.*] You're going to him?

IKE

Goin? Why of course I am. I'd never left him in the first place, but I just naturally had to see the herd through. I lowed to go straight back to him just as soon as I got them cattle in the cars. When I gets thar a telegram was waitin fer me sayin as how the boss had been cut up by a drunken puncher, an things was plum goin to smash on the ranch, so I had to hustle back here to tend to things. Seems like the cards war sure stacked agin Rip—that his two best friends, you an me, couldn't be with him in his sickness. But I knowed he war in good hands, cause they ain't a better man on the plains than old Cap Baird. But they ain't been hardly a minute I ain't thought of him. But now the boss is all right again, the ranch is runnin smooth, an if I had to, I'd fight my way through a prairie full of Injuns to get to that boy.

MAMIE

Ike, I believe you love him almost as much as I do. You must bring him back to me, and well and strong. For if anything should happen to him, I would not want to live. I mustn't talk that way, its weak and foolish of me, and selfish too; I would have to live for the little one, Ike, for his boy. I would live to teach him to be a man like his father, and to teach him to be strong and brave and tender like him.

IKE

Don't you worry, little gal, for I will bring him back. I'm

goin now, but I'll see you in the mornin before I start for Rip. I reckon you'll want to fix up somethin to send along. [*Takes hat and starts to leave;* MARIA *enters from left upper.*]

MAMIE

Before you go, Ike, I want to ask you something. You know when you came back you told me that Rip had been hurt in a stampede. Maria says that he was shot and that Faro Jim did it.

IKE

Damn Maria.

MAMIE

What?

IKE

I beg your pardon. I guess I might as well tell you the truth now. Faro Jim did shoot him one night, in the back, from behind a mesquite bush.

MAMIE

What happened to Faro Jim?

IKE

He escaped [*pointing downward, significantly*] next morning about sun-up. I heard somebody say he went south fer his health.

MAMIE

He was the only man on all the plains of whom I could really say I was afraid. [*With concern.*] You don't think he'd follow Rip and shoot him again, do you?

IKE

Wal, hardly. Faro Jim ain't lookin fer any more trouble. You might as well be afraid of me shootin him, so don't worry about Faro Jim any more. [*Turns when he gets to door.*] I hear he's reformed, anyhow. [*Exit door in flat.*]

MAMIE

[*To* MARIA.] Don't you think he spoke rather queer about Faro Jim? I believe he just told me that to keep me from worrying. I don't believe Faro Jim has gone south at all, do you Maria? [MARIA *shakes her head knowingly.* MAMIE *exits to left* MARIA *looks at baby, pulls out flask of whiskey and takes another drink. She rolls cigarette, lights it and exits door in flat.*]

RIP

[*Comes from behind curtain, passes his arm over his eyes as tho in a dream. Walks over and leans on mantle as tho very tired. Looks up and smiles. Hangs gun and hat on peg again. Is coming down stage when* MAMIE *enters, left upper. She looks at him a second, then rushes into his arms.*]

MAMIE

Rip, my boy.

RIP

Mamie, little gal.

MAMIE

Rip, am I dreaming or is it really you. I'll never let you get away from me again.

RIP

Little sweetheart, you can keep me in this here corral all the rest of my life, an you don't have to put no barb-wire fence around it either, for they couldn't drag me away with the best team of mules in the county. As far as its bein me, why its what's left of me. [RIP *sits down in chair by fireplace.* MAMIE *sits on floor at his feet.*]

MAMIE

Oh, Rip, sometimes I thought you surely would never come home again. It was so long to be away from you, and it was horrible to know that you were sick and near death, and I couldn't be with you. But every night I've laid awake thinking of you,

and in the cold gray hours of the morning after I would just fall asleep from exhaustion, I would dream of you. Asleep or awake I have been with you always.

RIP

And me, little gal, if I were as good a talker as Parson Henry I couldn't tell you in a hundred years how glad I am to get back again. Its like as though some traveler was lost out yonder on the sand hills where there's nothin but mesquite bushes and grease wood, and he's dyin of thirst, little gal. And he goes wanderin on like a madman, tryin to catch up with the beautiful mirage, and at last when he gives up and falls down on the burnin' sands to die, he finds a spring of cool life giving water right at his very feet.

MAMIE

How strangely you talk, Rip. You haven't been doing anything wrong, have you.

RIP

Not hardly, I reckon.

MAMIE

Once, Rip, I had a horrid dream about you.

RIP

Tell me about it, Mamie.

MAMIE

I dreamed I saw you in a city, in a fine house, and you were dressed so fine and looked so handsome, and a beautiful woman came and threw her arms around your neck and kissed you—then I woke up. [RIP *looks intently into the fire.*] At first it bothered me, and I am afraid—you mustn't be angry—I'm afraid I was a little jealous. But I knew who it was, Rip—it must have been your mother.

[*Takes both her hands and looks intently into her face.*] Yes, little gal, maybe it was my mother.

CURTAIN

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